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THE CONFERENCE OR BILLOPP HOUSE



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THE BILLOPP OR CONFERENCE HOUSE, 1898

Photograph by C. W. Hunt

The Conference or Billopp House

STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

By

WILLIAM T. DAVIS

Chairman, Committee on History, Conference House Association

Published under the auspices of the
STATEN ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

By

WILLIAM T. DAVIS
STATEN ISLAND

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INTRODUCTION

The following pages give the history of the Manor of Bentley and the old Conference House, or Billopp Mansion, at the western end of Staten Island in some detail, supported as far as possible by documentary evidence. While this method does not lend itself to easy reading, it is more useful and convincing than any general narrative that might be composed by the writer. It may be well, however, to briefly summarize the facts as brought together through an examination of the documents for such as desire a short outline history of the most outstanding old house on Staten Island, where representatives of the American and British governments in authority at the time met to discuss the war of the Revolution on September 11, 1776.

Years ago, a Staten Island historian, Gabriel P. Disosway, made the following comprehensive observation on this important Conference: "This momentous interview at the Old Billopp House, between the old world and the new, was an event regarded with extreme solicitude by the people of both at that day. With the developments of time it rises in the grandeur of a great battle point and monument of history. The interview was brief. There was no agreement, no reconciliation. Independence was maintained."

A bold spirited sea-roving Captain of the British navy with influence at court, came to America with the newly appointed Governor Andros in 1674, as 2nd Lieutenant in the Governor's Company of soldiers. He located in 1675 on a choice part of Staten Island, for which the next year he received a patent for 932 acres of land. Then he went as Commander to New Castle on the Delaware in 1677, but misbehaving himself and quarrelling with Governor Andros, he returned to England, and for a time was again in the Royal Navy. When Governor Dongan was appointed, Captain Billopp became more friendly with the local government, and received a grant for the Manor of Bentley in 1687 of 1600 acres of land, which tract included the land granted in 1676. Captain Billopp evidently came to America

and returned to England several times, and finally died in London in 1725.

His brother, Joseph Billopp, merchant, who held important positions on Staten Island, also resided in the old house at one time. In 1702 Captain Billopp gave to his two daughters Mary and Anne a power of attorney for the management of the Manor of Bentley, and his other interests in America.

Billopp's oldest daughter Mary had no children. His second daughter Anne married Thomas Farmar, who held many positions of trust, and they resided at the Manor of Bentley until they removed to Perth Amboy. Their third son Thomas Farmar, Jr., was born in 1711, and upon inheriting the Manor from his grandfather, became Thomas Billopp, under the conditions of the will. He died when he was 39 years of age, and was buried in the family burying ground on the estate. He was twice married, and was the father of ten children, his eldest son Christopher Billopp, born on Staten Island in 1737, inherited the property and lived there until the close of the Revolution, when he removed to St. John, New Brunswick. Like his father he was twice married and had ten children. He held responsible positions in his day, and represented Richmond County, with his father-in-law, Judge Seaman, in the Colonial Assembly.

Thus the property was held from 1676 to the close of the Revolution, by the Billopp family, and the old Manor House, built before 1700, was the most important and imposing structure on the Island.

The old Manor House was being used as a barrack for soldiers in September, 1776, when Benjamin Franklin wrote to Lord Howe on the 8th of the month suggesting that the Conference arranged to take place between the Americans and British, could be held either in Amboy or on Staten Island. The house on Staten Island was chosen, a room in which was cleaned and decorated with branches of trees, where, on the 11th of September, the Americans met Lord Howe and his Secretary, Henry Strachey, who was also a member of Parliament. Lord Howe and Franklin were friends of long standing; they had met in London on several occasions and had corresponded, so the meeting was on the whole a friendly one, but no agreement or "accommodation," as they styled it, could be reached. The Amer-

icans returned to Perth Amboy, and then to Philadelphia, to make their report to Congress.

As long ago as 1846 Gabriel P. Disosway wrote his account of the Manor of Bentley, and hoped that the old house might be preserved. During the last eighty years efforts have been numerous to bring this about, but until recently without success. As far as the main walls and beams are concerned the structure is in remarkably good condition, considering how long ago it was built.

With the object of bringing the matter of the preservation and restoration of the house before the people, the Conference House Association was organized in the Museum of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, at St. George, on the evening of September 30, 1925, following a mass-meeting held for the same purpose in Tottenville, September 21, 1925.

The officers and committees of the Association chosen at that and subsequent meetings were: *President*, Rev. Henry Delavan Frost; *Vice Presidents*, W. Irving Lewis, Sec. S. I. Chamber of Commerce; Mrs. Nathan J. Lowe, Mrs. William G. Willcox, Mrs. Newton D. Chapman, representing the N. Y. State D. A. R.; Miss Laura B. Yetman, Regent Abram Cole Chapter D. A. R.; *Treasurer*, Edward C. Bridgman; *Secretary*, Charles W. Leng, Director S. I. Inst. of Arts and Sciences; *Assistant Secretary*, Charlotte B. Page; *Historical Committee*, William T. Davis, President S. I. Hist. Soc., Chairman; *Acquisition Committee*, A. G. Marscher, President South Shore Protective Assn., Chairman; *Restoration Committee*, Carl F. Grieshaber, Chairman; Chester A. Cole, of Beauvais Post, Amer. Legion, Director of Restoration; *Finance Committee*, Horatio B. Nichols, Chairman, Judge Thomas C. Brown, and former State Senator Mark W. Allen, also members of the committee; *Committee to Secure Cooperating Support of Other Societies*, Mrs. M. P. Decker, Chairman; *Membership Committee*, W. Irving Lewis, Chairman; *Publicity Committee*, Stuart L. Ritz, Chairman; *Program Committee*, Cornelius G. Kolff, Chairman; *Parks Committee*, W. Lynn McCracken, Chairman; *Counsel to the Association*, former State Senator Howard R. Bayne, and Chairman of the *Committee on Incorporation*, George Julian Houtain. Mr. Reginald Pelham Bolton represents the N. Y. Historical Society; Mr. Paul Van Wagner, the B. P. O. Elks.

In an advisory capacity for the approval of expenditures, etc., pending incorporation, Edward C. Bridgman, Miss Laura B. Yetman, and William T. Davis were chosen Trustees at the meeting of May 14, 1926.

Borough President, John A. Lynch, as well as other officials, have also greatly aided the purposes of the Association and made possible the preservation of the old and important house.

Before the organization, as outlined above, had been completed, the Association was gratified to learn that the Harmon National Real Estate Corporation, W. Burke Harmon, President, had very generously given the Manor of Bentley House to the City of New York under deed dated April 29, 1926, and recorded May 4, 1926. This deed contains the following provision: "This conveyance is made upon the express condition that the premises within mentioned shall be used for park recreational or museum purposes."

The Chairman of the Historical Committee has taken it upon himself to bring together what he could find relating to the Manor of Bentley, and presents it in some detail in the following pages. It is a matter in which he has had much assistance. Mr. Royden W. Vosburgh has shown kindly interest in the preparation of the manuscript; has made many suggestions, and also copied a number of items while engaged in his particular line of research. Also Mr. Charles W. Leng, Director of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, Mr. Alexander J. Wall, Librarian of the New York Historical Society, and Mr. Charles Washbourn, of the same society, have aided me considerably, which I deeply appreciate.

In 1907 Mr. Charles Farmar Billopp published *A History of Thomas and Anne Billopp Farmar*, which has been most helpful in calling attention to records that might otherwise have been overlooked. *Anthon's Notes*, the Charles Gilbert Hine copy, and the original copy, now being published by the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, and the four histories of Staten Island, by Raymond Tysen (1842), John J. Clute (1877), Richard M. Bayles (1887), and Ira K. Morris (1898 and 1900), have also been consulted. The most reliable sources of information have been old documents, or the copies of the same, published by Stillwell, or by the States of New York, New Jersey and

Pennsylvania; also old newspapers and several papers published in the *Proceedings of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences* by Edward C. Delavan, Jr., and George W. Tuttle, who wrote the *Early Documents Relating to the Manor of Bentley and the Billop House*, from which the two patents to Billop have been copied.

Woodbridge and Vicinity, by Rev. Joseph W. Dally (1873), has been useful for facts concerning the captors of Billopp, both in June 1778 and June 1779, for on both occasions he was taken prisoner by men from Woodbridge, though Dally writes specifically of the last capture only.

In the *N. Y. Evening Post* for October 15, 16, 18, and 22, 1873, there appeared an article on *Staten Island* by J. Barnitz Bacon, from which a few items have been copied. This article may be classed among the short histories of the Island.

In 1856 William A. Whitehead published his *Contributions to the Early History of Perth Amboy and Adjoining Country with Sketches of Men and Events in New Jersey During the Provincial Era*, wherein he gives an account of the Billopps and Judge Thomas Farmar. It was he who confused some of the facts, which no doubt was the commencement of further confusion by some of our local historians. Be it stated, however, that Whitehead did not have access to many original documents. Especially did he lack the will of Capt. Christopher Billop written in 1724. There is now available considerably more data upon which to construct a history of the Manor of Bentley, but the writer is of the opinion that it would not be a difficult matter to add much more detailed information of value, as the discovery of old and interesting records is always to be expected. In fact a perusal of the newspapers of the time is almost sure to result in such discovery.

Also by way of introduction, we reprint what its author considered the first account of the old Billopp House. It is from *The New Pictorial and Illustrated Family Magazine*, published in New York by Robert Sears, Vol. 3, pp. 107-109, and appeared in 1846.* The old house is said by the author to be at Bentley, which was the postoffice until 1861, after which it was changed for no good reason at all to the less pleasing name of Tottenville.

* This account also appeared in *Information for the People*, published by Robert Sears in 1847.

Gabriel Poillon Disosway was probably correct in considering the following the first general account of Staten Island's most important old house.

AN EARLY ACCOUNT OF "THE OLD BILLOP HOUSE AT BENTLEY,
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK"

In approaching New York from Philadelphia by the Amboy route, few objects are more striking to the traveller's eye than a high, ancient-looking stone edifice, situated near the water, on the extreme west end of Staten Island. This is the "Old Billop House" at Bentley, of which we present a very correct sketch in our present number. Amid the general search for new designs is it not strange that this beautiful spot has escaped the notice of the artist and historian until now? The place too has some interesting associations worthy of a record.

More than a century ago, a Captain Billop, of the British Navy, took out a patent for the land, embracing 921 [932] acres, which was increased by a second to 1600. At the period of the American revolution, Bentley was owned by Christopher Billop, a gentleman of property, and a member of the house of assembly, who had always opposed the measures which led to a rupture with Great Britain. As soon as the war broke out, he became a partisan leader, and accepted the commission of colonel of the Staten Island militia. Lord [General] Howe, with a large force, took possession of Staten Island on the 4th of July, 1776, and it was held by the British during the whole war; and hence it became the theatre of frequent predatory incursions from the Americans, many of whom had taken up their abode on the opposite shores of New Jersey. By most of these parties violence was committed, and in some instances blood was shed, and lives were lost. Colonel Billop, at the time a warm party man and military leader, was closely watched, and it is said was twice taken from his own house, by armed bands from "the Jerseys," and thus made a prisoner. Amboy is in sight, and upon one of these occasions, he was observed by some Americans, who had stationed themselves with a spy-glass in the church steeple of that town. As soon as they saw him enter his abode, they ran to their boats, rapidly crossed the river, and he was soon their captive.

The British now in possession of New York, had confined in irons several Americans who had been made prisoners; and to retaliate for this measure, Colonel Billop was taken to Burlington jail. We have copied the mittimus, as a matter of curiosity, and the method of doing such things at that eventful period. Elisha Boudinot was then commissary of prisoners for New Jersey.

“To the keeper of the common jail for the county of Burlington, greeting:

“You are hereby commanded to receive into your custody, the body of Col. Christopher Billop, prisoner-of-war, herewith delivered to you, and having put irons on his hands and feet, you are to chain him down to the floor in a close room, in the said jail, and there to retain him, giving him bread and water only for his food, until you receive further orders from me, or the commissary of prisoners for the state of New Jersey, for the time being. Given under my hand, at Elizabethtown, this 6th day of Nov. 1779.

“ELISHA BOUDINOT,

“Com. Pris., New Jersey.”

The commissary at the same time regretted to Billop that necessity made such treatment necessary, “but retaliation is directed, and it will I most sincerely hope, be in your power to relieve yourself from the situation, by writing to New York to procure the relaxation of the sufferings of John Leshier, and Capt. Nathaniel Randal.”*

At this period, Colonel Simcoe, of the famous “queen’s rangers,” had command of a post in Richmond, whence he made a sudden and rapid incursion into New Jersey with his dragoons, and during the fight, his horse was killed, and he himself stunned by the fall was captured by the American militia.

He also was taken to Burlington, and unexpectedly became the fellow-prisoner of Colonel Billop. Simcoe severely complained to Governor Livingston of New Jersey, of their treatment, and addressed General Washington, urging his and Billop’s exchange, which was soon afterward effected. Several plans had been laid for the liberation of Simcoe; and the day before his

* Fitz Randolph was the correct name. He was a bold soldier, a celebrated patriot, and gallantly fell, in one of the New Jersey battles.

exchange, forty friends of the British cause had reached the neighborhood of Burlington with horses to rescue him.

At the close of the war, Colonel Billop with a number of British subjects, left the island for St. John, New Brunswick; and thus his estate at Bentley became confiscated. The old mansion is built of stone, its walls three feet thick, and bears the marks of former affluence and elegance. Like most buildings of the "olden time," it has its ghost and other romantic stories. "There," said the person who now occupies the house, as we entered one of the upper story front rooms, "that spot on the floor, we have never been able to wash out. It is supposed to be blood, and a murder is said to have been perpetrated here. This too is the ghost room, but I have never been disturbed by such visitors, and believe neither of the stories."

A person had visited an adjoining apartment last winter, searching for hidden treasure. He had been told by some mesmerist or fortune-teller of New York that money was to be found concealed in one of the walls of this room, and absolutely picked with hammer and chisel a large opening, but finally gave over the search as hopeless. This strange credulity was here exhibited in the winter of 1844!

In the cellar of the building, there is a brick vault, 30 feet [24 feet] long, and about 13 feet [10 feet, 10 inches] wide, finely arched, and may have been used as a place of retreat, or the receptacle for valuable articles in cases of emergency.*

As Billop was a well-known "tory," and a military character also, his house must have witnessed many an interview of such men as Lord Howe, General Kniphausen, Colonel Simcoe, and other officers of rank in the British service, who had command at various periods on the Island. Immediately after the severe battle on Long Island, Lord Howe sent a communication to Congress then assembled in Philadelphia, soliciting that a committee from that body might meet him, to confer on the difficulties between the two nations. For this purpose, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge, were appointed. The interview took place in this house, and these noble, patriotic, American spirits, declined every proposition for peace, that

* This vault had and still has a small window at its easterly end which was covered up when the extension at the back of the house was built.—W. T. D.

would not acknowledge the independence of their beloved country! Lord Howe expressed his distress, that he would be obliged to take such severe measures against the Americans, whom he so much regarded. Dr. Franklin in replying, assured him that the Americans would endeavor to lessen as much as possible the pain he might feel on their account, by taking the utmost care of themselves.

When the committee took leave of Lord Howe, he had them conveyed to Amboy in his own barge, and as they approached the wharf, Dr. Franklin began to jingle some gold and silver in his pockets. Upon their arrival, he offered a handful of the



The Old Billop House, at Bentley, west end of Staten Island.

From drawing by A. DeGroot

CONFERENCE HOUSE IN 1846

Westerly window on first floor is closed in pictures of later date.

money to the sailors, but the commanding officer, not permitting them to receive it, he replaced it in his pocket. Afterward he explained his conduct to his associates, by observing, "As these people are under the impression that we have not a farthing of hard money in the country, I thought I would convince them of their mistake. I knew at the same time that I risked nothing by an offer, which their regulations and discipline would not permit them to accept."

There is a beautiful lawn before the house, extending quite down to the water's edge. The views from the mansion are extensive, and rich in natural beauties. Directly in front the eye

rests on Amboy bay, the town itself beyond, and the Raritan river, which here expanding into the general body of waters, the whole soon flows onward to the mighty Atlantic.

Toward the south, at a more remote distance, are seen the mountains of Monmouth, and the most striking of all, the bold summits of Neversink, upon whose lofty highlands the beacon-fires of 1776 blazed, to alarm the country upon the expected approach of the enemy.

What a blessing is Peace! How changed the scene! Upon these very heights now glisten nightly the cheering rays of the lighthouse, welcoming the traveler of every nation, to our land of freedom and happiness! Where once was heard the horrid din and clarion of war, here now the anvil rings, the merry wheel dances, and the carol of the peaceful ploughboy resounded, while he traces the enriching and silent furrow!

The excellent view of the "Old Billop House," which accompanies this description, was sketched by Alfred DeGroot, a promising and native young artist of Staten Island. It is a faithful representation of this interesting and now venerable spot, and which it is the object of this article to save from neglect and perhaps oblivion.

[G. P. D.]

The above account of the old house, the grounds and the outlook, was no doubt accurate enough for many years, as there appears to have been but little change. In time, however, there appeared other descriptions, and with the advent of photography, many pictures. Some of these accounts, as well as illustrations, will be found near the end of this volume.

CHAPTER I

THE CONFERENCE OF SEPTEMBER 11, 1776

WHEN the peace conference of 1776 was held in the imposing stone house standing on the bluff at Bentley near the present Tottenville, it was already considered an old structure, and then, as now, commanded attention. Remarkable for its architectural features, considering the time of its erection, as well as for its historical associations, it is without doubt the most interesting old house on Staten Island.

Upon reaching New York in July, 1776, Lord Howe on behalf of George III made public a Declaration dated June 20, 1776, and sent copies to at least six prominent men with the following letter.¹

Eagle, off the coast of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay,

June 20, 1776

Sir,

Being appointed Commander in chief of the ships and vessels of his Majesty's fleet, employed in North-America, and having the honour to be by his Majesty constituted one of his Commissioners for restoring peace to his Colonies, and for granting pardons to such of his subjects therein as shall be duly solicitous to benefit by that effect of his gracious indulgence; I embrace this opportunity to inform you of my arrival on the American coast, where my first object will be an early meeting with Gen. Howe, whom his Majesty has been pleased to join with me in the said Commission.

In the mean time, I have judged it expedient to issue the inclosed Declaration, in order that all persons may have immediate information of his Majesty's most gracious intentions; and I desire you will be pleased forthwith to cause the said declaration to be promulgated, in such manner, and at such places within the province of New Jersey, as will render the same of the most public notoriety.

Assured of being favored with your assistance in every measure for the speedy and effectual restoration of the public tran-

¹ *New York Packet*, July 25, 1776.

quility, I am to request, you will communicate, from time to time, such information as you may think will facilitate the attainment of that important object in the province over which you preside. I have the honor to be,

With great respect and consideration,

Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

HOWE

Philadelphia.² In Congress July 19.

Resolved, that a copy of the circular letters and of the declarations they inclosed from Lord Howe to Mr. W. Franklin, Mr. Penn, Mr. Eden, Lord Dunmore, Mr. Martin, and Sir James Wright, late Governors, sent to Amboy by a flag, and forwarded to Congress, by General Washington, be published in the several Gazettes, that the good people of these United States, may be informed of what nature are the Commissioners, and what the terms, with the expectation of which the insidious Court of Britain has endeavored to amuse and disarm them; and that the few, who still remain suspended by a hope founded either in the justice or moderation of their late King may now, at length be convinced, that the valour alone of their country is to save its liberties.

Extract from the journals

CHARLES THOMSON, Sec'ry.

THE DECLARATION

By Richard Viscount Howe of the Kingdom of Ireland, one of the King's Commissioners for restoring peace to his Majesty's colonies and plantations in North-America, &c. &c.

A Declaration. Whereas by an act passed in the last session of Parliament to prohibit all trade and intercourse with the colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, the Three Lower Counties on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, South-Carolina, and Georgia and for other purposes therein mentioned, it is enacted, that "It shall and may be lawful to and for any person, or persons, appointed and authorised by His

² This resolution was published in the *New York Packet*, July 25, 1776, immediately preceding the "Declaration."

Majesty, to grant a pardon or pardons to any number or description of persons, by proclamation in His Majesty's name, to declare any colony or province, colonies or provinces, or any county, town, port, district, or place, in any colony or province, to be at the peace of His Majesty''; and that ''from and after the issu-

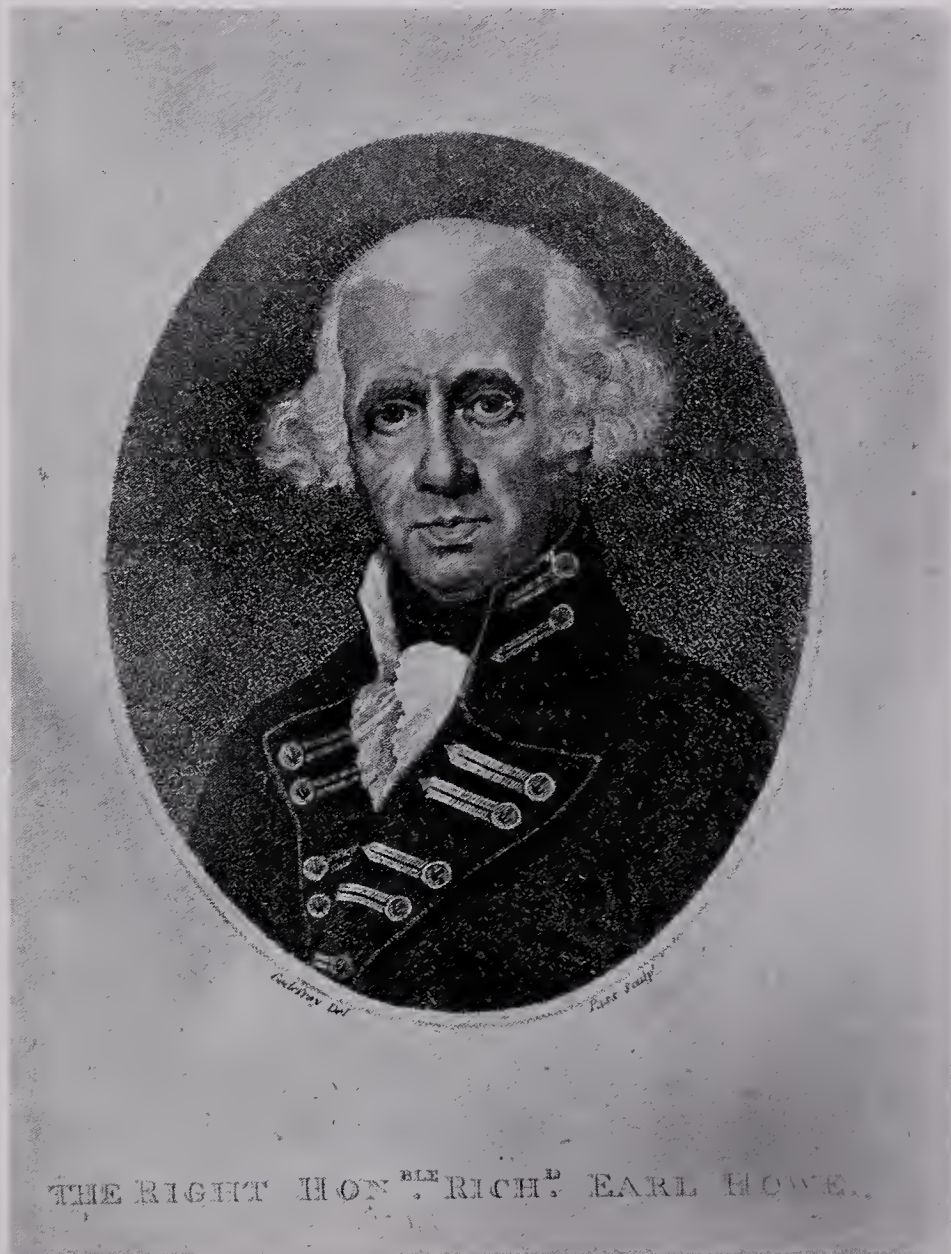


Illustration from B. F. Williamson

ing of any such proclamation in any of the aforesaid colonies or provinces, or if His Majesty should be graciously pleased to signify the same by his royal proclamation, then from and after the issuing of such proclamation," the said "act, with respect to such colony or province, colonies or provinces, county, town, port, district, or place, shall cease, determine, and be utterly void."

And whereas the King, desirous to deliver all his subjects from the calamities of war, and other *oppressions which they now undergo*, and to restore the said colonies to his protection and peace, as soon as the constitutional authority of government therein may be replaced, hath been graciously pleased, by letters patent, under the great seal, dated the sixth day of May, in the sixteenth year of His Majesty's reign, to nominate and appoint me Richard Viscount Howe, of the Kingdom of Ireland, and William Howe, Esq; General of his forces in North-America, and each of us, jointly and severally, to be His Majesty's Commissioner and Commissioners, for *granting his free and general pardons* to all those who, in the tumult and disorder of the times, may have deviated from their just allegiance, and who are willing, by a speedy return to their duty, to reap the benefits of the royal favor: And also for declaring, in His Majesty's name, any colony, province, county, town, port, district, or place, to be at the peace of His Majesty, I do, therefore, hereby declare that due consideration shall be had to the meritorious services of all persons who shall aid and assist in restoring the public tranquility in the said colonies, or in any part or parts thereof; that pardons shall be granted, dutiful representations received, and every suitable encouragement given for promoting such measures as shall be conducive to the establishment of legal government and peace, in pursuance of His Majesty's most gracious purposes aforesaid.

Given on board His Majesty's ship the Eagle,
off the coast of the province of Massachusetts-
Bay, the 20th day of June, 1776.

HOWE

This Declaration was published in the *New York Packet*, July 25, 1776, and the *New York Gazette* and the *Weekly Mercury*, July 29, 1776.

The following appeared in the *New York Gazette* for July 29 with the Declaration:

In Congress, July 17, 1776.

Resolved, That General Washington, in refusing to receive a letter said to be sent from Lord Howe, addressed to George Washington, Esquire, acted with a dignity becoming his station; and therefore this Congress do highly approve the same, and do direct

that no letter or message, be received on any occasion whatever, from the enemy, by the commander in Chief, or other the Commanders of the American army, but such as shall be directed to them in the characters they respectively sustain.

By order of the Congress,

JOHN HANCOCK, President.

The Declaration by Lord Howe did not make a favorable impression at the time, and the general opinion concerning it may be judged from the following letter of Silas Deane to Charles W. F. Dumas, to be found in the *Collections of the N. Y. Historical Society*, 1886, p. 307.

TO CHARLES W. F. DUMAS

Paris, October 6th, 1776

“Sir,—Yours of the 1st instant, I received. . . . In answer to your queries: First, a reconciliation between Great Britain and the United States of America is improbable ever to take place; it is absolutely impossible until after the sitting of Parliament. Secondly, Admiral Howe joined his brother early in August, and sent on shore to General Washington a letter, which was returned unopened, as no title was given to General Washington. A second was sent, and met the same fate. The Congress justified the General in his conduct, and ordered him to receive no letters except they were directed to him with his proper title. Lord Howe sent to the Governors of several Colonies his proclamation, which, by the army and people of New York was treated with contempt and ridicule.”

Before the foregoing Declaration had been published by New York papers, on July 25 and 29, a second one was issued, probably due to the appearance of the American Declaration of Independence. It was “Given at Staten Island the 14th Day of July, 1776,” and signed “Howe” and “W. Howe.” The wording was almost identical with that of the June 20th Declaration. It was published in the *New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, September 30, 1776, after the British army had reached New York, and copies are also to be found in *Journals of the Provincial Congress, etc., State of New York*, Vol. ii, pp. 287 and 290.

On the 27th of August, 1776, the Americans were defeated at the battle of Long Island, and the outlook for their cause seemed dark and discouraging; the British army not only occupied Staten Island, and a part of Long Island, but also took possession of New York.

Admiral Lord Howe had been delayed in reaching America, having spent much time in securing the powers mentioned in the Declaration, from the home government, enabling him and his brother General William Howe to treat with the Colonies. After the battle he thought that the Americans might be more willing to consider his Declaration than when it was first made public. So he proposed a conference to place before them more fully the powers granted to him and his brother. He sent General Sullivan, who had been taken prisoner at the battle, with a verbal message to Congress requesting that body to appoint some of its members in a private capacity to meet him for the purpose.

After a debate which occupied parts of three days, Congress agreed to the following: September 5, *Resolved*, That General Sullivan be requested to inform Lord Howe; that this Congress, being the representatives of the free and independent States of America, cannot, with propriety, send any of its members to confer with his lordship in their private characters, but that, ever desirous of establishing peace on reasonable terms, they will send a committee of their body to know whether he has any authority to treat with persons authorized by Congress for that purpose on behalf of America, and what that authority is, and to hear such propositions as he shall think fit to make respecting the same.

Ordered, that a copy of the foregoing resolution be delivered to General Sullivan, and that he be directed immediately to repair to Lord Howe.

September 6th.—*Resolved*, that the committee “to be sent to know whether Lord Howe has any authority to treat with persons authorized by Congress for that purpose, in behalf of America, and what that authority is, and to hear such propositions as he shall think fit to make respecting the same,” consist of three.

Benjamin Franklin, of Pennsylvania; John Adams, of Massachusetts, and Edward Rutledge, of South Carolina, were appointed as such committee.

The delegates spent two days in traveling from Philadelphia to Perth Amboy, where Lord Howe's barge was in readiness to receive them. An officer of the British army, who met the delegates, offered to remain as hostage for their safe return, but the Americans demanded no such pledge, and at their request the officer embarked with them and crossed to Staten Island. Lord Howe walked down to the water's edge as the boat approached, and perceiving his officer with the committee called out: "Gentlemen, you make me a very high compliment and you may depend upon it I will consider it the most sacred of things."

Whitehead states in his *Early History of Perth Amboy* (p. 335) that: "On the arrival of Lord Howe's barge at the dock, foot of Smith street, one of his principal officers was found to be on board, who had been directed to remain with the Americans as a hostage until the return of the Committee; but as this had not been desired, the officer was taken back to the island."

It was Franklin who first proposed that the conference be held in the house on Staten Island, as appears in his letter to Lord Howe of September 8. These letters, printed in this volume, throw much light on the circumstances leading up to the conference. Franklin it will be seen was a friend of the Howe family of long standing. He had visited at the home of Howe's sister in London, where he played chess, and where he met Lord Howe on several occasions. So when he stepped ashore on Staten Island, Howe received him and his companions more kindly than might otherwise have happened, and walking between lines of soldiers they were conducted to the old house.

The Billopp family, who owned and who had occupied the Manor house must have moved early in the war, for at the time of the conference it was used as a barrack by the troops. Indeed it seems to have been wise for the Billopps to have moved, for after the arrest of Governor William Franklin at Perth Amboy in June, 1776, the Americans held the town, until under General Greene they left to join Washington, when the British took possession about December 1, 1776. Whitehead in his *Early History of Perth Amboy*, 1856, p. 337, states:

"Single shots were oftentimes fired from rifles and muskets from one side to the other; and on one occasion when a number

of English officers were regaling themselves under the trees on the Island, Richard Griggs, the father of the late Thomas Griggs, so well aimed his piece that the ball shivered a bowl filled with some refreshing beverage which an officer was in the act of putting to his mouth—the company soon dispersed. The musket (or rifle) which aided in the execution of this feat was in the possession of the family a few years since, and may be so yet.”

It is further recorded that: “On July 24, 1776, there was an exciting artillery duel between the British battery near the Billopp House and the American redoubt in the rear of St. Peter’s Church in Amboy.”³

The following is an account of this engagement from a newspaper of the time: “Several Cannon were fired last Thursday Afternoon, from our Battery at Amboy, at a Number of Boats from Staten Island, bound to Sandy-Hook, supposed to join Part of the Ministerial Fleet laying there; This brought on a Cannonade from the Encampment of the Regulars near Billop’s Point, on the Island, which continued very hot on both Sides for near an Hour; The Boats got clear; but many of the Regulars were seen to fall, and several carried off, supposed to be wounded. On our Side a Soldier belonging to one of the Philadelphia Battalions was killed, and one wounded; a Horse in a Carriage had his Head shot off in the Street, and some Damage was done the Houses.”—*New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, July 29, 1776.

It will be seen from the foregoing that at the time of the Conference, and for some time before and after, it was wise for Colonel Billopp to stay more in the interior of the Island, and he no doubt resided with his father-in-law, Judge Seaman, on the Fresh Kills Road.

On the occasion of the Conference, states John Adams, “his lordship had prepared a large handsome room, by spreading a carpet of moss and green sprigs, from bushes and shrubs in the neighborhood till he had made it not only wholesome, but romantically elegant; and he entertained us with good claret, good bread, cold ham, tongues, and mutton.”

³ *Staten Island*:—*N. Y. Evening Post*, Oct. 18, 1873.

There can be no doubt but what the Conference took place in one of the two front rooms on the first floor, for they are the only large ones. Morris has stated it as his opinion that it was in the room to the right of the main entrance, that is the southerly room, while Bayles, no doubt guided by *Anthon's Notes*,⁴ states that the "Conference took place in the room at the north-west corner of the house on the main floor."⁵ This according to tradition was the dining-room, and it is probably the room in which the Conference was held.

Sir Henry Strachey, secretary and advisor to Lord Howe, a member of Parliament, and an experienced man of affairs, was also present, both at the luncheon, and the Conference, that followed.

In Parton's *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 2, pp. 144-145, we read: "Lord Howe had made hasty preparations for the entertainment of his expected guests. The house appointed for the interview was a rather large, plain, old fashioned house of stone, with a veranda in front; the residence of a man of wealth; but, of late, it had been occupied by soldiers, and had become dilapidated and dirty. The house was standing and inhabited as late as 1858, though it was an old house in 1776. . . . After reaching the apartment prepared, Lord Howe, his secretary, Mr. Henry Strachey, the committee, and the Hessian colonel, all sat down to the collation, and spent an agreeable half hour in discussing the good claret, the good bread, the cold ham, the tongues, and the mutton. The colonel then withdrew, the table was cleared, and the conference began."

Lord Howe explained to the committee the nature of the power with which he and his brother Sir William Howe in command of the army had been invested, as well as many other matters, and in view of the great historical interest centered about this meeting, it is especially desirable that the reader should have as full an account as possible of what really took place. We therefore quote the following from the *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*, edited under direction of Congress by Francis Wharton with preliminary index, and notes historical and legal, vol. ii, pp. 139-145, 1889.

⁴ See chapter on "The Old Manor House and Grounds."

⁵ *History of Richmond County*, p. 112.

Conference of Franklin, Adams, and Rutledge with Lord Howe.*
[September 11, 1776.]

General Sullivan, having been taken prisoner in the battle of Long Island, was sent on parole by Lord Howe with an oral message to Congress. On September 2, 1776, Congress sent for General Sullivan, then in Philadelphia, to appear and deliver his message. He did, and the message given by him was as follows:

“Lord Howe could not at present treat with Congress, as such; yet he desired to confer with some of its members, whom he would regard as private gentlemen, and meet at any place they might appoint. He and his brother had full powers to arrange an accommodation on terms advantageous to both countries, the obtaining of which had detained him in England two months, so that he did not arrive in America until after the Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, if Congress were disposed to treat, many things which they had not yet even asked might and ought to be granted them, and the authority of Congress itself recognized.”

The result was that Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge were elected a committee to confer with Lord Howe.

IN CONGRESS, *September 13.*

The committee appointed to confer with Lord Howe, having returned, made a verbal report.

Ordered, That they make a report in writing, as soon as conveniently they can.

SEPTEMBER 17.

The committee appointed to confer with Lord Howe, agreeable to the order of Congress, brought in a report in writing, which was read, as follows:

“In obedience to the order of Congress, we have had a meeting with Lord Howe. It was on Wednesday last, on Staten Island, opposite to Amboy, where his lordship received and entertained us with the utmost politeness.

“His lordship opened the conversation by acquainting us that, though he could not treat with us as a committee of Congress, yet as his powers enabled him to confer and consult with any private gentlemen of influence in the Colonies on the means of restoring

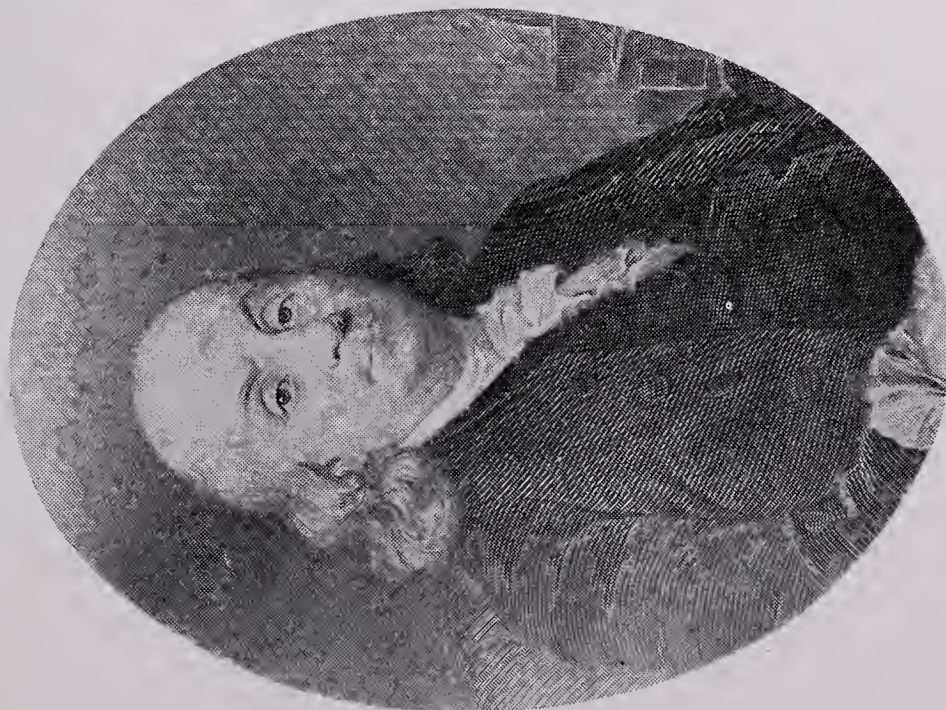
* MSS. Dept. of State; 5 Sparks' Franklin, 104. For prior correspondence, see Howe to Franklin, June 20, 1776; Franklin to Howe, July 20, 1776; Howe to Franklin, Aug. 16, 1776; Franklin to Howe, Sept. 8, 1776.



EDWARD RUTLEDGE



JOHN ADAMS



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

peace between the two countries, he was glad of this opportunity of conferring with us on that subject, if we thought ourselves at liberty to enter into a conference with him in that character.

“We observed to his lordship that, as our business was to hear, he might consider us in what light he pleased, and communicate to us any proposition he might be authorized to make for the purpose mentioned; but that we could consider ourselves in no other character than that in which we were placed by order of Congress.

“His lordship then entered into a discourse of considerable length, which contained no explicit proposition of peace except one, namely, that the Colonies should return to their allegiance and obedience to the Government of Great Britain. The rest consisted principally of assurances that there was an exceeding good disposition in the king and his ministers to make that government easy to us, with intimations that, in case of our submission, they would cause the offensive acts of Parliament to be revised and the instructions to the governors to be reconsidered, that so, if any just causes of complaint were found in the acts, or any errors in government were perceived to have crept into the instructions, they might be amended or withdrawn.

“We gave it as our opinion to his lordship that a return to the domination of Great Britain was not now to be expected. We mentioned the repeated humble petitions of the Colonies to the king and Parliament, which had been treated with contempt and answered only by additional injuries; the unexampled patience we had shown under their tyrannical government; and that it was not till the last act of Parliament, which denounced war against us, and put us out of the king’s protection, that we declared our independence; that this declaration had been called for by the people of the Colonies in general; that every colony had approved of it when made; and all now considered themselves as independent States, and were settling or had settled their governments accordingly; so that it was not in the power of Congress to agree for them that they should return to their former dependent state; that there was no doubt of their inclination to peace, and their willingness to enter into a treaty with Great Britain that might be advantageous to both countries; that, though his lordship had at present no power to treat with

them as independent States, he might, if there was the same good disposition in Britain, much sooner obtain fresh powers from thence than powers could be obtained by Congress from the several colonies to consent to a submission.

“His lordship then, saying that he was sorry to find that no accommodation was likely to take place, put an end to the conference.

“Upon the whole, it did not appear to your committee that his lordship’s commission contained any other authority of importance than what is expressed in the act of Parliament, namely: that of granting pardons, with such exceptions as the commissioners shall think proper to make, and of declaring America, or any part of it, to be in the king’s peace upon submission; for, as to the power of inquiring into the state of America, which his lordship mentioned to us, and of conferring and consulting with any persons the commissioners might think proper and representing the result of such conversation to the ministry, who, provided the Colonies would subject themselves, might, after all, or might not, at their pleasure, make any alterations in the former instructions to governors, or propose in Parliament any amendment of the acts complained of, we apprehended any expectation from the effect of such a power would have been too uncertain and precarious to be relied on by America had she still continued in her state of independence.”

Ordered, That the foregoing report, and also the message from Lord Howe, as delivered by General Sullivan, and the resolution of Congress in consequence thereof, be published by the committee who brought in the foregoing report.

Of the conference between the commissioners and Lord Howe Mr. Parton (2 Life of Franklin, 145) gives the following narrative, supplied by Mr. George H. Moore, secretary of the New York Historical Society, and derived from the notes of Strachey, Howe’s secretary, with manuscript memoranda by Howe:

LORD HOWE. “Long ago, gentlemen, I entertained the opinion that the differences between the mother country and her Colonies might be accommodated to the satisfaction of both. I was known in England to be a well-wisher to America, particularly to the province of Massachusetts Bay, which had endeared itself to me by the very high honor it had bestowed upon my eldest brother. I assure you, gentlemen, that I esteem that honor to my family

above all things in this world. Such is my gratitude and affection to this country on that account, that I feel for America as a brother, and if America should fall, I should feel and lament it like the loss of a brother."

Dr. FRANKLIN (with an easy air, a collected countenance, a bow, a smile, and all that naiveté which sometimes appeared in his conversation and often in his writings).* "My lord, we will use our utmost endeavors to save your lordship that mortification."

Lord HOWE (taking the joke too seriously, but suppressing his feelings). "I suppose you will endeavor to give us employment in Europe." (Dead silence on the part of the committee and countenances blank. Lord Howe recovers from the digression.) "My going out as commissioner from the king was talked of long ago, as Dr. Franklin is aware. After his departure I heard no more of it for a long time. Then an idea arose of sending over several commissioners, but to this I objected, for my plan was to go alone, with only a civil commission, and proceed straight to Philadelphia, and meet the Congress face to face. I objected even to my brother's being in the commission, from the delicacy of the employment, and from my desire to take upon myself all the reproach that might be the consequence. It was thought best, however, that General Howe, being in command of the army in America, should be joined in the commission, and that I should have the naval command; since in that case the two commissioners would control the movements of both forces. I acquiesced in this arrangement. I hoped to reach America before the army had made a movement to begin the campaign, and had no doubt that if the disposition of Congress remained the same as expressed in their last petition to the king I should be able to bring about an accommodation. That petition, I thought, was a basis† to confer upon, as it contained matter which, with candor and discussion, might be wrought into a permanent system. True, the address to the people, which accompanied the petition to his majesty had injured the effect of the petition. Nevertheless, to the moment of my arrival in America I flattered myself that, taking the petition as a basis, I should be able to do some good. But since I left England you have yourselves changed your ground by the Declaration of Independency. That act, gentlemen, if it can not be got over, precludes all treaty making; for, as you are aware, I have not, nor do I expect ever to have, power to consider the Colonies in the light of independent States. You must be sensible also that I can not confer with Congress. I can not acknowledge a body which is not acknowledged by the king,

* John Adams.

† Parton has "sufficient basis."

whose delegate I am; for the same reason I can not confer with you gentlemen as a committee of the Congress. If you are unwilling to lay aside that distinction it will be improper for me to proceed. That, however, I trust, you will regard as an unessential form, which may for a moment lie dormant, and give me leave to consider you merely as gentlemen of great ability and influence in the country, who have met here to converse with me



“INTERVIEW BETWEEN LORD HOWE AND COMMITTEE OF CONGRESS”

From painting by Chappell in 1866

and try if we can devise the outline of a plan to stay the calamities of war. I beg you to consider the delicacy of my situation and the reproach I should be liable to if I should be understood by any act of mine to have treated with the Congress or acknowledged its authority. I hope you will not by any imputation commit me upon that point. Even in the present meeting I have gone rather beyond my powers.”

Dr. FRANKLIN. "You may depend upon our taking care of that, my lord."

Lord HOWE. "I think the idea of a Congress may easily be thrown out at present, because if matters can be so settled that the king's government would be re-established the Congress would of course cease to exist. And if you mean really an accommodation of that kind you must see how unnecessary it is to stand upon a form which you are negotiating to give up."

Dr. FRANKLIN. "Your lordship may consider us in any view you think proper. We, on our part, are at liberty to consider ourselves in our real character. But there is really no necessity on this occasion to distinguish between members of Congress and individuals. The conversation may be held as among friends."

Mr. ADAMS. "Your lordship may consider me in what light you please. Indeed, I shall be willing to consider myself for a few moments in any character which would be agreeable to your lordship, except that of a British subject."

Lord HOWE (with gravity). "Mr. Adams is a decided character."

Mr. RUTLEDGE. "I think, with Dr. Franklin, that the conversation may be as among friends."

Lord HOWE. "On my arrival in this country, gentlemen, I thought it expedient to issue a declaration, which one of you has done me the honor to comment upon. I endeavored to couch it in such terms as would be least exceptionable, and I conclude you must have supposed I did not express in it all I had to offer. I thought, however, that I said enough to bring on a discussion which might lead the way to accommodation. But the Declaration of Independency has since rendered me more cautious, of opening myself, for it is absolutely impossible for me to treat, or even confer, upon that ground, or to admit the idea in the smallest degree. If that is given up I flatter myself there is still room for me to effect the king's purpose. His majesty's most earnest desire is to make his American subjects happy, to cause a reform in whatever affected the freedom of their legislation, and to concur with his Parliament in the redress of any real grievances. My powers are, speaking generally, to restore peace and grant pardons, to attend to complaints and representations, and to confer upon the means of a reunion upon terms honorable and advantageous to the Colonies and to Great Britain. You know, gentlemen, that we expect aid from America; our dispute seems only to be concerning the mode of obtaining."

Dr. FRANKLIN. "Aid we never refused upon requisition."

Lord HOWE. "Your money, let me assure you, is the smallest consideration. America can confer upon Great Britain more solid advantages; it is her commerce, her strength, her men, that we chiefly want."

Dr. FRANKLIN. "Ay, my lord, we have in America a pretty considerable manufactory of men."*

Lord HOWE. "It is desirable to put a stop to these ruinous extremities, as well for the sake of our country as yours. When an American falls England feels it. The question is: Is there no way of treating back of this step of independency, and thus opening the door to a full discussion? Now, gentlemen, having opened to you the general purport of my commission and the king's disposition to a permanent peace, I must stop to hear what you may choose to observe."

Dr. FRANKLIN. "I suppose your lordship has seen the resolution of the Congress which has sent us hither. It authorizes us to inquire what authority your lordship bears and what propositions you have to offer for the consideration of the Congress. That resolution contains the whole of our commission. Nevertheless, this conversation, if productive of no immediate good effect, may be of service at a future time. I will therefore say that America considered the prohibitory act as the answer to her last petition to the king. Forces have been sent out and towns have been burnt. We can not now expect happiness under the domination of Great Britain. All former attachments are obliterated. America can not return to the domination of Great Britain, and I imagine that Great Britain means to rest it upon force. The other gentlemen will doubtless deliver their sentiments."

Mr. ADAMS. "The resolution of the Congress which declared independency was not taken up upon its own authority. Congress had been instructed so to do by all the Colonies. It is not in our power, therefore, my lord, to treat otherwise than as independent States; and for my own part I avow my determination never to depart from the idea of independency."

Mr. RUTLEDGE. "I am one of the oldest members of the Congress, my lord, having been a member from the beginning. I think it is worth the consideration of Great Britain whether she would not derive greater advantages from an alliance with the Colonies as independent States than she has hitherto done. England may still enjoy a great share of the American commerce, and so procure raw materials for her manufactures. Besides, the United States can protect the West India Islands more effectually and more easily than England can, to say nothing of the Newfoundland fishery; while the products both of the West Indies and of Newfoundland would continue to enrich the merchants of England. I am glad this conversation has occurred, as it will be

* Mr. Strachey, misunderstanding this remark, added these words, "alluding, as should seem, to their numerous army." Lord Howe, more used to Dr. Franklin's manner, corrected his secretary by penciling on the margin, "No, their increasing population."

the occasion of opening to Great Britain the consideration of the advantages she may derive from an alliance with America before anything is settled with other foreign powers. With regard to the people consenting to come again under the English Government, it is impossible. I can answer for South Carolina. The royal government there was very oppressive. The officers of the crown claimed 'privilege' and confined people for breaches of 'privilege.' At last we took the government into our own hands, and the people are now settled and happy under that govern-



THE CONFERENCE

From model by Ned J. Burns in Public Museum

ment. They would not, even if the Congress should desire it, return to the king's government.'

LORD HOWE. "If such are your sentiments, gentlemen, I can only lament that it is not in my power to bring about the accommodation I wish. I have not authority, nor do I ever expect to have, to treat with the Colonies as States independent of the crown of Great Britain. I am sorry, gentlemen, that you have had the trouble of coming so far to so little purpose. If the Colonies will not give up the system of independency, it is impossible for me to enter into any negotiation."

DR. FRANKLIN. "It would take as much time for us to refer to and get answers from our constituents as it would the royal com-

missioners to get fresh instructions from home, which I suppose might be about three months."

LORD HOWE. "It is in vain to think of my receiving instructions to treat upon that ground."

DR. FRANKLIN (after a pause). "Well, my lord, as America is to expect nothing but upon unconditional submission"—

LORD HOWE (interrupting him). "No, Dr. Franklin; Great Britain does not require unconditional submission. I think that what I have already said proves the contrary; and I desire, gentlemen, that you will not go away with such an idea."

DR. FRANKLIN. "As your lordship has no proposition to make to us, give me leave to ask whether if we should make propositions to Great Britain (not that I know or am authorized to say we shall) you would receive and transmit them?"

LORD HOWE. "I do not know that I could avoid receiving any papers that should be put into my hands, though I am doubtful of the propriety of transmitting them home. Still, I do not say that I would decline doing so."

The conference ended. Lord Howe politely attended the committee to the barge, which bore them in a few moments to the shore of New Jersey.

A briefer account of this conference is given in John Adams' journal, published in 3 J. Adams' Works, 72, ff; J. Adams to S. Adams, Sept. 17, 1776, 9 *id.*, 443.

Hutchinson, in his Diary, thus summarily disposes of the conference, as above detailed:

"*December 9th, 1776.*—An account in the papers, taken from the Philadelphia papers, of the proceedings of the Howes, through Lord Drummond, and afterwards through Sullivan, with the conference held with the Howes and Franklin, John Adams, and Rutledge, from the Congress, all printed by the Congress, causes great speculation. Lord Townshend called in a perfect rage, and hints that they make what agreement they will, but Parliament must finally approve it. I suppose it to be true that there has been such a conference, but doubt not Lord Howe will deny some part of what the Congress publish." (2 Hutchinson's Diary, 119.)

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Barrow, in his Life of Earl Howe (p. 94), thus speaks of the conference:

"The Congress said they could not send any of their members to confer with the noble lord (Howe) in their private characters; but that, ever desirous of establishing peace on reasonable terms, they would send a committee of their body to ascertain if Lord Howe had any and what authority to treat with persons authorized by Congress. Dr. Franklin, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Rutledge waited according on Lord Howe in Staten Island; but as these

gentlemen found that the two commissioners had no other authority than that conveyed by act of Parliament, namely, that of granting pardons on submission, the conference soon ended, and the committee returned to make their report to Congress. No benefits, indeed, could be expected to the mother country from a committee composed of men whose principles were violent in the extreme, and who were known to entertain a bitter hatred to the mother country. His lordship even condescended to inform them that he was ready to discuss the means of reconciling the differences between Great Britain and America with any gentlemen of influence and importance, but they declined to act in any other capacity than that with which Congress had invested them." If Lord Howe really made such a statement to the commissioners, this, by itself, would have barred further conference.

In the Sparks' Papers, volume 55, at Harvard College, are a series of papers relating to the attempted negotiations between England and the United States under the commissions of May, 1776, and April, 1778.

For American reports of these interviews, etc., see 1 Sparks' Franklin, 414; 5 *id.*, 97; *id.*, 187. The British report is in 8 Almon's Remembrancer. See Barrow's Life of Howe, chapter 4.

The message from Lord Howe to Congress by General Sullivan, as well as the report of the committee appointed to wait on Lord Howe on Staten Island, may be found in the *New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Saturday, September 28, 1776.

We quote here *The New York Evening Post*, October 16, 1873, from the second article on *Staten Island*: "As if to preclude any possible negotiations on a colonial basis, Congress had resolved, on September 9, before the departure of their committee, "that in all continental commissions and other instruments where heretofore the words 'United Colonies' have been used the style be altered for the future to the United States."

Eight days after the meeting on Staten Island the following Declaration was issued, evidently composed by Henry Strachey, and no doubt giving the conclusions reached by him and Lord Howe, as the result of the Conference. It appeared in *The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury* for September 30, 1776, in the same issue with the Declaration given at Staten Island on the 14th of July. Both of these Declarations were published in subsequent issues of the paper:

By Richard Viscount Howe, of the Kingdom of Ireland, and William Howe, Esq; General of his Majesty's Forces in America,

the King's Commissioners for restoring Peace to his Majesty's Colonies and Plantations in North-America, &c. &c. &c.

Declaration.

Although the Congress, whom the misguided Americans suffer to direct their Opposition to a Re-establishment of the constitutional Government of these Provinces, have disavowed every Purpose of Reconciliation, not consonant with their extravagant and inadmissable Claim of Independency, the King's Commissioners think fit to declare, that they are equally desirous to confer with his Majesty's well-affected Subjects, upon the Means of restoring the public Tranquillity, and establishing a permanent Union with every Colony, as a Part of the British Empire.

The King being most graciously disposed to direct a Revision of such of his Royal Instructions as may be construed to lay an improper Restraint upon the Freedom of Legislation, in any of his Colonies, and to concur in the Revisal of all Acts by which his Subjects there may think themselves aggrieved, it is recommended to the Inhabitants at large, to reflect seriously upon their present Condition, and Expectations, and to judge for themselves whether it be more consistent with their Honor and Happiness to offer up their Lives as a Sacrifice to the unjust and precarious Cause in which they are engaged, or to return to their Allegiance, accept the Blessings of Peace, and be secured in a free Enjoyment of their Liberties and Properties, upon the true Principles of the Constitution.

Given at New-York, the 19th Day of September, 1776.

HOWE

W. HOWE.

By Command of their Excellencies,

HEN. STRACHEY.

As has been seen this Conference was of great importance; the Americans ascertained what the British government was willing to concede, and the British government in turn discovered that however discouraging and dark the outlook might appear, the Colonists were determined upon independence.

It may also be pointed out at this time that of the six commissioners who met in Paris in the latter part of 1782 for the final settlement of the details of the Revolution, that Franklin, Adams and Strachey had previously met and became acquainted at the Conference held on Staten Island, September 11, 1776.

LETTERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND LORD HOWE⁶

Lord Howe to Benjamin Franklin (B. M.)

Eagle, June 20th, 1776.

I cannot, my worthy Friend, permit the Letters and Parcels, which I have sent in the state I received them, to be landed, without adding a word upon the subject of the injurious Extremities in which our unhappy disputes have engaged us.

You will learn the Nature of my Mission, from the official Dispatches, which I have recommended to be forwarded by the same Conveyance. Retaining all the Earnestness I ever express'd to see our Differences accommodated, I shall conceive, if I meet with the Disposition of the Colonies I was once taught to expect, the most flattering Hopes of proving serviceable in the Objects of the King's paternal Solitude, by promoting the Establishment of lasting Peace and union with the Colonies. But, if the deep-rooted Prejudices of America, and the Necessity for preventing her Trade from passing into foreign Channels, must keep us still a divided People, I shall from every private as well as public Motive, most heartily lament, that this is not the Moment wherein those great Objects of my Ambition are to be attained; and that I am to be longer deprived of an Opportunity to assure you personally of the Regard with which I am your sincere and faithful humble Servant.

HOWE.

P. S. I was disappointed of the Opportunity I expected for sending this Letter at the Time it was dated, and have ever since been prevented by Calms and contrary Winds from getting here, to inform General Howe of the Commission with which I have the Satisfaction to be charged, and of his being joined in it.

Off Sandy Hook, 12th of July.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN TO LORD HOWE⁷

Philadelphia, July 30th, 1776.

My Lord,

I receiv'd safe the Letters your Lordship so Kindly forwarded to me, and beg you to accept my thanks.

⁶ From *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, by Albert Henry Smyth, vol. VI, pp. 458-466.

⁷ Several copies of this letter exist. Sparks and Bigelow follow the copies dated July 20th, which is probably the correct date. See Howe's reply of August 16.

The official dispatches, to which you refer me, contain nothing more than what we had seen in the Act of Parliament, viz. Offers of Pardon upon Submission, which I was sorry to find as it must give your Lordship Pain to be sent upon so fruitless a Business.

Directing Pardons to be offered to the Colonies, who are the very Parties injured, expresses indeed that Opinion of our Ignorance, Baseness, and Insensibility, which your uninform'd and proud Nation has long been pleased to entertain of us; but it can have no other effect than that of increasing our Resentments. It is impossible we should think of Submission to a Government, that has with the most wanton Barbarity and Cruelty burnt our defenceless Towns in the midst of Winter, excited the Savages to massacre our Peacefull Farmers, and our Slaves to murder their Masters, and is even now bringing foreign Mercenaries to deluge our Settlements with Blood. These atrocious Injuries have extinguished every remaining Spark of Affection for that Parent Country we once held so dear; but, were it possible for *us* to forget and forgive them, it is not possible for *you* (I mean the British Nation) to forgive the People you have so heavily injured. You can never confide again in those as Fellow Subjects, and permit them to enjoy equal Freedom, to whom you know you have given such just Cause of lasting Enmity. And this must impel you, were we again under your Government, to endeavour the breaking our Spirit by the severest Tyranny, and obstructing, by every Means in your Power, our growing Strength and Prosperity.

But your Lordship mentions "the King's paternal solicitude for promoting the Establishment of lasting *Peace* and Union with the Colonies." If by Peace is here meant a Peace to be entered into between Britain and America, as distinct States now at War, and his Majesty has given your Lordship Powers to treat with us of such a Peace, I may venture to say, though without Authority, that I think a Treaty for that purpose not yet quite impracticable before we enter into foreign Alliances. But I am persuaded you have no such Powers. Your nation, though by punishing those American Governors, who have fomented the Discord, rebuilding our burnt Towns, and repairing as far as possible the mischiefs done us, might yet recover

a great Share of our Regard, and the greatest Part of our growing Commerce, with all the Advantage of that additional Strength to be derived from a Friendship with us; but I know too well her abounding Pride and deficient Wisdom, to believe she will ever take such salutary Measures. Her Fondness for Conquest, as a warlike Nation, her lust of Dominion, as an ambitious one, and her wish for a gainful Monopoly, as a commercial One, (none of them legitimate Causes of war,) will all join to hide from her Eyes every view of her true Interests, and continually goad her on in those ruinous distant Expeditions, so destructive both of Lives and Treasure, that must prove as pernicious to her in the End, as the Crusades formerly were to most of the Nations in Europe.

I have not the Vanity, my Lord, to think of intimidating by thus predicting the Effects of this War; for I know it will in England have the Fate of all my former Predictions, not to be believed till the Event shall verify it.

Long did I endeavor, with unfeigned and unwearied Zeal, to preserve from breaking that fine and noble China Vase, the British Empire; for I knew, that, being once broken, the separate Parts could not retain even their Shares of the Strength and Value that existed in the Whole, and that a perfect Reunion of those Parts could scarce ever be hoped for. Your Lordship may possibly remember the tears of Joy that wet my Cheek, when, at your good Sister's in London, you once gave me Expectations that a Reconciliation might soon take Place. I had the Misfortune to find those Expectations disappointed, and to be treated as the Cause of the Mischief I was laboring to prevent. My Consolation under that groundless and malevolent Treatment was, that I retained the Friendship of many wise and good Men in that country, and among the rest, some Share in the Regard of Lord Howe.

The well-founded Esteem, and, permit me to say, Affection, which I shall always have for your Lordship, makes it Painful to me to see you engaged in conducting a War, the great Ground of which, as expressed in your Letter, is "the necessity of preventing the American trade from passing into foreign Channels." To me it seems, that neither the Obtaining or Retaining of any trade, how valuable soever, is an Object for which men

may justly spill each other's Blood; that the true and sure Means of extending and securing Commerce is the goodness and Cheapness of Commodities; and that the profit of no trade can ever be equal to the Expence of compelling it, and of holding it, by Fleets and Armies.

I consider this War against us, therefore, as both unjust and unwise; and I am persuaded, that cool, dispassionate Posterity will condemn to Infamy those who advised it; and that even Success will not save from some Degree of Dishonor those, who voluntarily engaged to Conduct it. I know your great motive in coming hither was the hope of being Instrumental in a Reconciliation; and I believe, when you find that to be impossible on any Terms given you to propose, you will relinquish so odious a Command, and return to a more honourable private Station.

With the greatest and most sincere Respect I have the Honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient humble Servant,
B. FRANKLIN.

LORD HOWE TO BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (L. C.)

Eagle, off Staten Island, Aug^t the 16th, 1776.

I am sorry, my worthy friend, that it is only on the assurances you give me of my having still preserved a place in your esteem, that I can now found a pretension to trouble you with a reply to your favour of the 21st [20th ?] past.

I can have no difficulty to acknowledge, that the powers I am invested with were never calculated to negotiate a reunion with America, under any other description than as subject to the crown of Great Britain. But I do esteem those powers competent, not only to confer and negotiate with any gentlemen of influence in the colonies upon the terms, but also to effect a lasting peace and reunion between the two countries, were the temper of the colonies such as professed in the last petition of the Congress to the King. America would have judged in the discussion how far the means were adequate to the end, both for engaging her confidence and proving our integrity. Nor did I think it necessary to say more in my public declaration; not conceiving it could be understood to refer to peace on any other conditions but those of mutual interest to both countries, which could alone render it permanent.

But, as I perceive, from the tenour of your letter, how little I am to reckon upon the advantage of your assistance, for restoring that permanent union which has long been the object of my endeavours, and which, I flattered myself when I left England, would be in the compass of my power; I will only add, that, as the dishonour, to which you deem me exposed by my military situation in this country, has effected no change in your sentiments of personal regard towards me, so shall no difference in political points alter my desire of proving how much I am your sincere and obedient humble servant,

HOWE.

TO LORD HOWE

Philadelphia, September 8, 1776.

My Lord,

I received your favour of the 16th past. I did not immediately answer it, because I found that my corresponding with your Lordship was disliked by some members of Congress. I hope now soon to have an opportunity of discussing with you, *vivâ voce*, the matters mentioned in it; as I am, with Mr. Adams and Mr. E. Rutledge, appointed to wait on your Lordship, in consequence of a desire you expressed in some conversation with General Sullivan, and of a resolution of Congress made thereupon, which that gentleman has probably before this time communicated to you.

We propose to set out on our journey tomorrow morning, and to be at Amboy on Wednesday about nine o'clock, where we should be glad to meet a line from your Lordship, appointing the time and place of meeting. If it would be agreeable to your Lordship, we apprehend, that, either at the house on Staten Island opposite to Amboy, or at the governor's house in Amboy, we might be accommodated with a room for the purpose. With the greatest esteem and respect, I have the honour to be, my Lord, &c.

B. FRANKLIN.

LORD HOWE TO BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Eagle, off Bedlow's Island, September 10th, 1776.

Lord Howe presents his compliments to Dr. Franklin, and according to the tenour of his favour of the 8th, will attend to

have the pleasure of meeting him and Messrs. Adams and Rutledge to-morrow morning, at the house on Staten Island opposite to Amboy, as early as the few conveniences for travelling by land on Staten Island will admit. Lord Howe, upon his arrival at the place appointed, will send a boat (if he can procure it in time), with a flag of truce, over to Amboy; and requests the Doctor and the other gentlemen will postpone their intended favour of passing over to meet him, until they are informed as above of his arrival to attend them there.

In case the weather should prove unfavorable for Lord Howe to pass in his boat to Staten Island to-morrow, as from the present appearance there is some reason to suspect, he will take the next earliest opportunity that offers for that purpose. In this intention he may be further retarded, having been an invalid lately; but will certainly give the most timely notice of that inability. He, however, flatters himself he shall not have occasion to make further excuses on that account.

THE JOURNEY OF THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FROM PHILADELPHIA TO STATEN ISLAND⁸

Monday September 9. "On this day Mr. Franklin, Mr. Edward Rutledge, and Mr. John Adams proceeded on their journey to Lord Howe, on Staten Island, the two former in chairs, and the latter on horseback. The first night we lodged at an inn in New Brunswick. On the road, and at all the public houses, we saw such numbers of officers and soldiers, straggling and loitering, as gave me, at least, but a poor opinion of the discipline of our forces, and excited as much indignation as anxiety. Such thoughtless dissipation, at a time so critical, was not calculated to inspire very sanguine hopes, or give great courage to ambassadors. I was, nevertheless, determined that it should not dishearten me. I saw that we must, and had no doubt but we should, be chastised into order in time.

"The taverns were so full we could with difficulty obtain entertainment. At Brunswick, but one bed could be procured for Dr. Franklin and me, in a chamber little larger than the bed, without a chimney, and with only one small window. The window was open, and I, who was an invalid and afraid of the air

⁸ From the *Autobiography of John Adams*, contained in the *Works of John Adams*, by his grandson, Charles Francis Adams.

in the night, shut it close. 'Oh!' says Franklin, 'don't shut the window, we shall be suffocated.' I answered, I was afraid of the evening air. Dr. Franklin replied, 'The air within this chamber will soon be, and indeed is now, worse than that without doors. Come, open the window and come to bed, and I will convince you. I believe you are not acquainted with my theory of colds.' Opening the window, and leaping into bed, I said I had read his letters to Dr. Cooper, in which he had advanced, that nobody ever got cold by going into a cold church or any other cold air, but the theory was so little consistent with my experience, that I thought it a paradox. However, I had so much curiosity to hear his reasons that I would run the risk of a cold. The Doctor then began a harangue upon air and cold, and respiration and perspiration, with which I was so much amused that I soon fell asleep, and left him and his philosophy together; but I believe they were equally sound and insensible within a few minutes after me, for the last words I heard were pronounced as if he was more than half asleep. I remember little of the lecture, except that the human body, by respiration and perspiration, destroys a gallon of air in a minute; that two such persons as were now in that chamber, would consume all the air in it in an hour or two; that by breathing over again the matter thrown off by the lungs and the skin, we should imbibe the real cause of colds, not from abroad, but from within. I am not inclined to introduce here a dissertation on this subject. There is much truth, I believe, in some things he advanced, but they warrant not the assertion that a cold is never taken from cold air. I have often conversed with him since on the same subject, and I believe with him, that colds are often taken in foul air in close rooms, but they are often taken from cold air abroad, too. I have often asked him whether a person heated with exercise going suddenly into cold air, or standing still in a current of it, might not have his pores suddenly contracted, his perspiration stopped, and that matter thrown into the circulations, or cast upon the lungs, which he acknowledged was the cause of colds. To this he never could give me a satisfactory answer, and I have heard that in the opinion of his own able physician, Dr. Jones, he fell a sacrifice at last, not to the stone, but to his own theory, having caught the violent cold which finally choked him, by sitting for some hours at a window, with the cool air blowing upon him.

“The next morning we proceeded on our journey, and the remainder of this negotiation will be related from the Journals of Congress, and from a few familiar letters, which I wrote to my most intimate friends before and after my journey.”

“Lord Howe had sent over an officer as a hostage for our security. I said to Dr. Franklin, it would be childish in us to depend upon such a pledge, and insisted on taking him over with us, and keeping our surety on the same side of the water with us. My colleagues exulted in the proposition, and agreed to it instantly. We told the officer, if he held himself under our direction, he must go back with us. He bowed assent, and we all embarked in his lordship’s barge. As we approached the shore, his lordship, observing us, came down to the water’s edge to receive us, and looking at the officer, he said, ‘Gentlemen, you make me a very high compliment, and you may depend upon it, I will consider it is the most sacred of things.’ We walked up to the house between lines of guards of grenadiers, looking fierce as ten Furies, and making all the grimaces, and gestures, and motions of their muskets, with bayonets fixed, which, I suppose, military etiquette requires, but which we neither understood nor regarded.

“The house had been the habitation of military guards, and was as dirty as a stable; but his lordship had prepared a large handsome room, by spreading a carpet of moss and green sprigs, from bushes and shrubs in the neighborhood, till he had made it not only wholesome, but romantically elegant; and he entertained us with good claret, good bread, cold ham, tongues, and mutton.”

SIR HENRY STRACHEY

The first Sir Henry Strachey was secretary to Lord Clive in India; rendered important service and was much thought of by him. He was a Whig member of Parliament from about 1770 to 1812, and at the end of the revolution, was sent as one of the negotiators at the Peace of Versailles, which ended the war with America. John Adams met him again on that occasion and wrote: “Strachey is as artful and insinuating a man as they could send; he pushes and presses every point as far as it can possibly go; he is the most eager, earnest, pointed spirit.”

In the opinion of John St. Loe Strachey,⁹ “One thing that helped to make Strachey a good peace negotiator was the fact

⁹ *The Adventure of Living*, p. 69.

that a year [six years] before he had gone to America as secretary to Lord Howe and Admiral Howe when they were sent out either to carry on the war by sea and land or else to make peace with the insurgent colonies.”

The same author continues: “As a result of this official visit to America, Strachey had a very large number of confidential papers left in his possession and some of these escaped the burning which was the fate of most of his correspondence. He was one of the men who made it a practice to destroy private papers as soon as they were done with.”

It will be seen by a perusal of Parton's *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (Vol. 2, p. 488, 489, 490, 494, 497) that Strachey played an extremely important part in the final peace negotiations with the Americans. He states: “To demonstrate the justice of their claim to the province of Maine, who should the ministry send over but that Mr. Strachey, whom Mr. Adams and Dr. Franklin had met on Staten Island at the beginning of the revolution, when they conferred with Lord Howe.”

The chief matters in dispute were the boundaries, the fisheries, and the tories, and Mr. Adams tells how he discomfited the “venerable Strachey.”

It was Strachey who went to London in November, 1782, to report and to receive final instructions on these important matters. “Toward the close of the interview, Mr. Jay inquired if the propositions brought by Strachey were the ultimatum of the ministry. With much reluctance Mr. Strachey answered, No; upon which hope revived in the minds of the American commissioners. Mr. Jay also asked whether Mr. Oswald had authority to conclude and sign. “Absolutely,” replied Mr. Strachey. “We agreed,” records Mr. Adams, “that these were good signs of sincerity.” The British members of the conference, Mr. Oswald, Mr. Fitzherbert and Mr. Strachey, finally came to agreement with the American members, Mr. Adams, Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay, on November 29, 1782. It will be seen from the foregoing what an important part three of the individuals who met in the old house on Staten Island on September 11, 1776, finally played in the settlement of the affairs of our country, and not the least among them was Henry Strachey.

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN CHRISTOPHER BILLOP

The antecedents of the Conference House date back to 1674, when James, Duke of York, afterwards King James the Second, appointed Major Edmund Andros his Governor of New York. As he was to replace Anthony Colve, who was Governor-General under the Dutch during their brief re-occupancy of the colony, Andros brought with him a company of one hundred soldiers, to support his authority. The Duke of York issued commissions to the officers of this company, *viz.*, Edmund Andros, Captain; Anthony Brockholls, first Lieutenant; Christopher Billop, [second] Lieutenant, and Caesar Knapton, Ensign.

The following is a copy of Billop's¹ Commission:

COMMISSION OF CHRISTOPHER BILLOP TO BE LIEUTENANT OF MAJOR ANDROS' COMPANY

To Christopher Billopp L^t to Edm^d Andros Esq^r &c.

Whereas I have thought fitt out of the good opinion I have conceived of you to appoint you to be Lieut^t of y^e Company above mentioned. These are to will authorize and require you forthwth to take upon you y^e Comand of Lieu^t of y^e said Company accordingly and duely to exercise y^e officers and sold^{rs} of y^e same in Armes according to y^e direccons of your Cap^t and to use yo^r best care and endeavour to keepe them in good ord^r and discipline. Hereby comanding them to obey you as their Lieu^t and you likewise to obey & follow such ord^{rs} and direccons as you shall from time to time receive from myselfe or yo^r said Cap^t according to y^e discipline of War and y^e trust reposed in you. For w^{ch} this shal be yo^r Warr^t Given und^r my hand and seale at Windsor the 2^d of July, 1674. —*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, Vol. 3, p. 221.

Captain Billop must have been in possession of the south west end of Staten Island as early as 1675, for at a meeting of a

¹ Captain Christopher Billop spelled his name with one p, while his brother and grandson seem to have preferred to call themselves "Billopp."

council held in New York, August 5, 1675, with the Governor present, it is recorded "The Neck of Land Capt. Billopp is upon is judged to bee about 1300 Acres. Ordered, That he have the whole Neck allowing halfe to be divided into Lotts, y^e rest to be allowed for Commonage, so to be entyre unto him, but then he to have no Commonage upon y^e rest of y^e Island;— That a Survey thereof be made to know the true Extent."—*Documents Colonial History, N. Y.*, Vol. 13, p. 485.

Robert Ryder was probably engaged to make this survey, as appears on a subsequent page of this history.

Meanwhile Billop seems to have early commenced his activities in real estate, the following being among the first of the transactions. It is recorded in the Records of the Proprietors of East New Jersey in Perth Amboy in the "*Records of Land Anno 1665 to 1677*," item 50.

This Indenture made the 16th day of 7temb. in the seven and twentieth yeare of the Raigne of o^r most Gracious Sovⁿ. Lord Charles the Second by the Grace of God of England. Scotland France and Ireland King defender of the Faith &c. Between William Pardon of the City of New Yorke in America of the one part and Phillip Carterett Esq^r Governor of the Province of New Jersey and Christopher Billop of New Yorke aforesaid Gent. of the other ptie Witnesseth That the said William Pardon for and in Consideration of a Marriage by the Grace of God Shortly to be had a^d solemnized between the said William Pardon and Anna Bostoe and of a Joynter to be made unto the said Anna in case she survive the said William in full Liewe and satisfaction of her Dower and thirds out of the Lands and Tenements hereafter mentioned and for settling the same to such uses intents and purposes herein after declared Hath Granted aliened Enfeofed and Confirmed, and by these presents doth Grant Alien infeoff and confirme unto the said Phillip Carterett and Christopher Billop and the Successor of the said Phillip and the heires of the said Christopher all the Messuage or Tenement Lott of Ground Lying and being in Elizabeth Towne in the Provine of New Jersey aforesaid with all such Lands which as yet are not laid out as shall belong to the same between the houses and or Lotts of Nathaniel Tuttle and Robert Moss being six Acres of Clear Land within Fence and twelve Acres of wood-

land without Fence together with all and singular houses Edifices Buildings Barnes Stables Yards Orchards Gardens pastury Meadows woods and premisses with the Appurtenances for and belonging to the same. To Have and to holde the said Messuage or Tenement Lott Six Acres of Land twelve Acres of Land and all and singular other the premisses with . . . [?] unto the said Phillip Carterett & Christopher Billop and the successors and assignees of the said Phillip and the heires and assignes of the said Christopher for and to the Uses Intents and Purposes hereafter following that is to say to the Uses and behoof of the said William Pardon untill the Solemnization of the said inten^d Marriage & from & after the solemnization of the said Marriage then to the Use and behoof of the said William Pardon and Anna his wife for and during the terme of their two Natural Lives and the Life of the two Longer Liver of them and from and after their Deceased then to the use and behoof of the heirs of the said William Pardon on the Body of the said Anna Lawfully begotten or to be begotten and for want of such Issue then to the Use and behoof of the Right heires of the said William Pardon for Ever. and that he the said W^m. Pardon hath good right and Lawfull Authority to Settle Convey and assure the said premisses with the Appurten^{cs} in manner and forme as aforesaid and that he hath not nor will not at any time hereafter sell or dispose of the said Lands or tenements without the Consent of the said Anna his wife. The Rent and services from hence forth to be due and payable to the Lord or Lords proprietor or proprietors only Excepted and foreprized In Witness whereof the parties of these presents Interchangeably have here unto sett their hands and seales the day and yeare first above Written.

An^o. Dom. 1675

Ph. Carterett

Christ^{er}. Billop

Sealed and Delivered by Christopher Billop in the presence of

Mathias Nicolls

Richard Cornell

Walter Webley

Signed and delivered by Phillip
Carterett in the presence of

Robert Vanquellin

Sam^l Leete.

Next Captain Billop received his patent for 932 acres of land, which we copy from "*Early Documents Relating to the Manor of Bentley and the Billop House*," by George W. Tuttle, *Pro. Staten Island Inst. Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 1, pp. 32-36:²

A PATENT AND CONFIRMATION GRAUNTED UNTO CAP^T. CHRISTOPHER BILLOP FOR A TRACT OF LAND UPON STATEN ISLAND

Edmund Andros, Esq., etc.,	}	[Patent
to		Dated 25th March 1676
Capt. Christoph ^r Billop		Rec. 4 Patents 97-98 (Old p. 101)]

Whereas there is a Certaine Parcell or Tract of Land within a Neck upon Staten Island the which by vertue of a Warrant hath been laid out for Capt. Christopher Billop lying and being on the South west side of the said Island beginning on the North side of a Creeke which lyes over against the Land belonging to M^r. Gabriel Minvielle in the Province of New Jersey so running with the West side amongst the great Kill to the Bay then forward with the South side amongst the said Bay to the East side of a great Pond lying under a High Hill the nearest to Regreniers Creeke and from thence Stretching with a North west Line to the North side of the aforesaid Creeke over against M^r. Minviells Contain- ing the quantity of nine hundred thirty two acres As also thirty Acres of Salt Meadow lying on the North East side of the Land laid out for Francis Lee neare Smoaking Point as by the returne of the Survey under the Hand of the Surveyor Gen^{all}. doth and may appeare. Now Know Yee That by vertue of the Commis- sion and Authority unto mee given by his Royall Highnesse I have Given and Graunted and by these presents do Give and Graunt unto Capt Christoph^r. Billop his Heires and Assignes the afore recited Parcell or Tract of Land Meadow Ground and premisses with all and Singular the Appurtenances To have and to hold the said Parcell of Land Meadow Ground and premisses unto the said Capt Christopher Billop his Heires and Assignes unto the proper use and behoofe of him the said Capt Christo- pher Billop his Heires and Assignes forever Hee making Im- provement of the said Land according to Law, and continuing in obedience and Conforming himselfe according to the Lawes of

² Mr. Tuttle informs me that his copy of the two patents was compared with the originals.

this Government and Yeilding and Paying therefore Yearely and every yeare unto his Royall Highnesse use as a Quitt Rent Twenty Bushells of good Winter Wheat unto such Officer or Officers in Authority there as shall bee Empowered to receive the same Given under my Hand and Sealed with the Seale of the Province in New York the 25th day of March in the 28th. Yeare of his Ma^{ties} Reigne Annoq Dm 1676

E. ANDROSS

There has been much speculation as to why Billop received so large a tract of land. His father, Christopher Billop, Gent, of London, was said to be a "friend of the King." It is also possible that he at one time saved the life of the Duke of York during a naval engagement, and coming to America that he successfully sailed around Staten Island in twenty-four hours at the request of the Duke or the Governor. From the time that James, Duke of York, granted a part of his domain to John, Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret in 1664, to the year 1833, when the matter was finally settled, New Jersey laid claim to Staten Island, the excitement over the matter often reaching a high pitch. So while Billop's sailing exploit, as handed down by tradition, may have been informative to Governor Andros and the Duke, the matter became one of agreement.³ It appears to have been at first the intention to include Staten Island in the grant to Berkeley and Carteret as their grant was bounded easterly by the Hudson River, but the stronger colony of New York and its governor, desired to retain the Island.

We quote from *The Evening Post* of October 15, 1873: "The tradition in relation to Billop is thus related by Judge Disosway, the local chronicler of the island: 'Geographically, Staten Island is almost a part of New Jersey. To settle the question as to which province it should belong, the Duke of York decided that all the islands in the Bay of New York around which a ship could sail in twenty-four hours should belong to New York. In those days it was somewhat doubtful whether Staten Island could be thus engirdled. There was a spirited contest on the question. Captain Billop, in the Bentley, achieved the feat and secured the Island for his royal patron, leaving it to remain a part of his province of New York.' "

³ Raymond M. Tysen, *History of Staten Island*, 1842, p. 11, Clute; *Annals of Staten Island*, 1877, p. 47.

About this time Billop desired to give up his commission under Andros, as appears from the following:

Letter of Sir John Werden to Governor Andros, "Dated at St. James's Augst y^e 31st 1676."

"I have lett his R^{ll} H^{ss} know of Capt. Bellopps desire to part wth his comⁿ of 2^d Leiuetenant under you; but y^e Duke is not pleased to give way unto it by any means; yett sayth in regard he hath formerly served y^e King, he would have you let him continue still in y^t employm^t, provided he demeane himselfe as he ought; but if you find he doth otherwise, and y^t you should judge it necessary to put him out, yⁿ y^e Duke would have you put in Capt: Salisbury in his roome, and a comission will in y^t case be sent to him upon your notice hither.—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, Vol. 3, p. 239.

On Robert Ryder's manuscript map dated 1670, but which also includes, according to Mr. George W. Tuttle, names of a date five or six years later, as well as on his survey entitled: "Description of a neck of land upon Staten Island laid out for Christopher Billop by Robert Ryder Surveyor," probably made in 1676, a building is shown in about the position of the Old Conference House.

Jasper Danckaerts, in his journal under date of October 12, 1679, states that when they came to the West point of the Island they found an Englishman living alone some distance from the road, but at the same time he failed to mention any such substantial and imposing structure as the Conference House.

On October 9, 1677, Captain Christopher Billop mortgaged to his brother Joseph Billop of London, a house in Beverley, England, for 600 pounds, and it is the opinion of Charles Farmar Billopp in his *History of Thomas and Anne Billopp Farmar*, that the money was used in building the house. A record of the deed and bond in this transaction is to be found in the New York Secy. of State's Office, *Deeds* 6; 48, 49, 50, 51. Copies made from photostats follow.

Entred at the request of M^{rs} Mary Billop the following writings 8^{ber} 26 1677.

To all Christian people to whom this present writing shall Come Now know yee that I Christopher Billop Commander in

Newcastle upon Delaware belonging to the Colony of New York, in America under his Roy^{al} High^s the Duke of York and greeting in our Lord god everlasting, and being in pfect health for and in Consideration of the Natural affection and brotherly love which I have and bear unto my wel beloved [49] Brother Joseph Billop in Gracier Strete London wholesale Grocer, and also for divers good Causes and Considerations me at this present especially moving, have given granted, and by these presents do give grant & Confirm unto the said Joseph Billop all my right tittle, Interest, and Claim of one house, situated lying and being in Beverly in Yorkshire in y^e Kingdom of England neare y^e North-barre lying between the house formerly in possession of my Grandfather Christopher Billop late alderman of the said Towne, and the house of Michael Wharton Esq^r, To have & to hold the said house with all and Singular the Shopps, Sellrs, Sollars Chambers Rooms ways Entrys Yards, Backside houses buildings, Gutters, water Courts Easements proffitts commodityes and appurtenances whatsoever to y^e s^d Joseph Billop his heirs Executors, Administrators and assigns forever, and to the only proper use and behoof of him the said Joseph Billop, and his heirs for evermore, & Likewise all Wainscotts, Glass Windowes doors & Locks in and upon the said house, or any appurtenances thereunto belonging And further these presents Wittness that the said Joseph Billop his heirs Executors Administrators and assigns shall quietly and Peaceably Enjoy Occupy & possess y^e s^d house with all the appurtenances thereunto belonging, As afores^d from all person or Persons that shall Justly lay [50] Claim thereunto, and shall, and will ever defend the same unto the Said Joseph Billop and his heyers for ever, In Wittness whereof I the said Christopher Billop have hereunto sett my hand and seal this 9th of Octobe^r 1677

CHRISTO. BILLOP

By the Governo^r.

I do hereby Certify att the request of Mrs Mary Billop that the Persons whose Names are here in sett down as Wittnesses to this deed are Magistrates or Officers in Newcastle in Delaware M^r John Moll being a Justice of the Peace, & M^r Edmund Cantwell Sherriff there. New York Octo: 25: 1677

[p. 50]

E: ANDROS

Know all men by these presents that I Christopher Billop Commander in Newcastle upon Delaware belonging to the Colony of New York in America under his Royall Highness the Duke of York doe Stand and am bonded & obliged unto Joseph Billop of Gracier Streete London wholesale [51] Grocer in the sum of six hundred Pounds Sterling money, to which payment well & truly to be made I do bind myself my heirs Executors & Administrators firmly by these presents. Sealed with Seal Dated the 9th day of October in the yeare of our Lord god 1677.

The Condicon of this obligation is such that if the above bounded Christopher Billop his heirs & Executors or Administrators & every of them doe well & truly perform fullfill accomplish and keep all & singular the Covenants grants Clauses and Conditions, whatsoever which on y^e part and behalf of the said Christopher Billop his heirs Executors and Administrators Comprised in one deed of gift bearing Even date with these presents, that then this obligation to be void Or else the same to stand in full force power & virtue.

Signed Sealed & delivered in the presence of John Moll, Ed: Cantwell.

The Same Order on this as on the bill of Sale.

We next quote from Mr. Charles F. Billopp's History, pp. 23 and 24:

"On August 13, 1677, after he had been in New York for three years, Governor Andros appointed Billopp Collector of Customs in the Delaware River and Bay at the old town of New Castle. On the next day we find that he appointed him to be commander in the Delaware River and Bay with the title of Captain. Copies of both commissions are to be found on pages 695-6, *Pennsylvania Archives, second series*, volume V. He remained as commander on the Delaware for about two years. It is said by Mr. Holcomb, in his interesting work, 'Early Ecclesiastical Affairs in New Castle, Delaware': He seems to have been a very arbitrary and tyrannical individual, and carried things with a high hand. His chief offense, in Mr. Holcomb's view, was that he 'deprived the Court of the use of the Court Room and prison, which were within the fort, using the first for a barn, and the prison for a stable, and when remonstrated with by the Court, answered, "that the Court should not sit in the fort, and that

it did not concern the Court.” But he afterwards agreed to remove his horses, and cause the Court Room to be cleaned.’ He also prohibited a Mr. John Yoe, a minister, from exercising his ministerial office, but as Mr. Holcomb himself does not appear to be a great admirer of the reverend gentleman, perhaps Captain Billopp, who knew him personally, had very good reasons for his action.

“His offence, however, in the eyes of Andros, his superior officer, was the stand he made in the affair of John Fenwick, who had made a settlement at Salem, New Jersey, on the eastern side of the Delaware River. Fenwick claimed his title from the original proprietors, which Andros denied on the ground that the title had lapsed by the temporary occupancy of the Dutch. Billopp supported Fenwick’s claim, and, as he was the immediate agent through whom Andros had to deal with Fenwick, affairs became rather unpleasant. Billopp went to New York to have it out with Andros, which he did, but he seems to have gone out with it, for we read that he was requested to resign his commission ‘for talking against the Governor in a loud voice at the Custom House.’

“Billopp remained in America a short time, during which time appears a letter from the Secretary of the Duke of York to Andros, advising him to be cautious in his ‘treatment of Captain Billopp, as his father, Christopher Billopp, Gent., of London, is a friend of the King.’ There are letters, too, that show anxiety and fear that he may sell his plantation to citizens of the rival colony—New Jersey.”

Some documents sustaining the foregoing statements, as well as adding new facts, may now be quoted. The first two are from *Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 12, p. 580.

COMMISSION OF CAPT. CHRISTOPHER BILLOP AS
COMMANDER IN DELAWARE.
CAPT. XTOPEP BILLOP TO BE SUB-COLLECTOR Y^E
CUSTOMS OF DELAWARE RIVER.

By the Governor.

By virtue of the authority derived unto me under his Roy^{ll} Highness, I do hereby constitute and appoint you Capt. Chris-

topher Billop to be Sub-Collector of the Customs of Delaware River; You are therefore carefully to discharge your duty therein, particularly that nothing be any wayes imported or exported, but according to Acts of Parliament, or to make seizure and due prosecucion, and if condemned one third to y^e Informer, one third to yourselfe, and one third to y^e King, and to give an account of your proceedings, and observe such orders as you shall from time to time receive from y^e chiefe Collector or principall officers of y^e Customs here and superiours; New Castle y^e only port for all Entryes and Clearings; And for whatt you shall lawfully act or do in the premises this shall be your sufficient authority and warrant. Given under my hand in New Yorke, this 13th. of August 1677

E. ANDROSS.

COMMISSION FOR CAPT CHRISTOPHER BILLOP TO BE
COMMANDER IN DELAWARE RIVER AND BAY.

Edmund Andros Esq^r &c.

By virtue of the authority derived unto mee under his Roy^l High^{sse} I do hereby constitute and appoint you Christopher Billop to be Commander in Delaware River and Bay; you are therefore to take care, that the Militia in y^e severall places be well armed, duly exercised and kept in good order and discipline; and y^e officers and souldiers to observe such orders and directions, as you shall from time to time receive from me, or other superiour officers, according to y^e trust reposed in you. Given under my hand and seale in New York, this 14th day of August, 1677.

EDM^D ANDROS. S.

To Capt Christopher Billop.

LETTER FROM GOV. ANDROS TO THE JUSTICES IN NEW CASTLE
ON THE MODUS OF ADMINISTERING JUSTICE.

A Letter to y^e Justices of y^e Court att New-Castle in Delaware.

New-Yorke, August y^e 14th 1677.

Gentlemen,

This is by Capt. Billop who goes to releive Capt. Collier, and to bee Commander of the Militia and fforces in the River and

Bay and to take care as chiefe officer and Accordingly to determine any Difference, and Order Guards and Guard places as occasion, and will presently for y^e outfarmes or plantacons in New-Castle bounds; Hee is also Sub-Colector and Mr. Herman Clerk of y^e Customes. . . .

Your affectionate friend

E. ANDROS. S.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 12, p. 581.

Billob probably maintained his house on Staten Island while he was Commander at New Castle, as appears from the following copied from *Bergen's Register of the Early Settlers of Kings County, Long Island, N. Y.*, p. 200:

“Paulus Marlet married Lysbeth Bunwyck, and appears to have settled on Staten Island. January 19, 1678, he and Francis Vesselton, Hans Lawrens, Dan^l Stillwell, Ed. Marshall, and Peter Jansen were arrested by the constable of S. I. and imprisoned for abducting a servant-girl of Christopher Billob, and discharged from prison on bail on the 24th inst., as per p. 64 of Calendar of English Manuscripts.”

At a Councell held in N. Y. May 1st 1678 Vpon the desire of C. Christop^r Billob Commander of Delaware to bee directed about Sloopes goeing up the River above Newcastle for which a temporary permission had beene granted by the Go:

Ordered That the time granted by the Go: being, expired, The former orders not to goe up to bee observed.

.

The other part of his Lett^r about the Goods landed by the Mary of Leverpoole pretended to bee seized by Cap^t. Billob for which they offer to pay the Custome to bee left to Cap^t. Dyre to answer—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 12, pp. 593, 594.

The Capt. Dyre mentioned above was a member of the Governor's Council and also Chief Collector of Customs under the Andros administration.

In a letter to “Right Honb^{le} Governor,” [Andros], dated New Castle, May 9th 1678, Jean Paul Jacquett, John Moll, Garritt Otto, John Moore and Fopp Outhout, Justices, state: “Finally,

since your honor's departure, there have happened several complaints of the country concerning several strange actions of your Commander Captain Billop, which hath occasioned some disputes and differences between us and your said Commander—we knowing it to be our duty not to suffer the poor Commonalty to be oppressed, which all to relate would be too long.”—*New Jersey Archives, First Series*, vol. 1, p. 195.

Letter. Secretary Nicolls to the Court at New Castle, Relative to the Conduct of John Fenwick, etc.

Gent.

.

For the Comp^{lt}. made by the Comonalty agst the Commander C. Billop, wee are not willing to entermedle therein, the rather for that you signify yo^r. resolucon to send some of yo^r. bench to the Go: after his arrivall which wee expect daily to treat with him about that & other materiall.

Gent.

Yo^r. most humble serv^t.

May 25, 1678

By order of the Councill

M. N. Secr.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 12, p. 595.

The trouble with Major Fenwicke who had assumed authority on the east side of the Delaware at New Salem, or “Swamp-town,” continued and Billop, as commander, wrote him several letters which were also signed by one or more of the justices who had criticised him in their letter to the Governor on May 9 of the same year. Billop visited Fenwicke, and upon his return informed the justices at New Castle that Fenwicke had agreed to appear at New York. A letter dated July 17, 1678, and containing the following sentence, was then sent to Fenwicke: “Now therefore if you will forbear the Assuming any power of Governm^t. to yo^rselfe, and wthin the space of 20 days will appeare in New Yorke and there surrender yo^rselfe according to yo^r Parole then Signify soe mutch in a Letter under yo^r hand to the hono^{rb}le Councill in New Yorke, and send y^e same Letter

open to us under a Couert by this bearer that soe wee may be possitive of yo^r Resolucon.

N: Castle

Remaining S^r.

July 17th. 1678

Yo^r Affectionate friends

(was signed)

Chris Billop.

John Moll.

Peter Alrichs.

Fop Outhout.

Jean Paul Jacquet.

Garret Otto.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 12, p. 599.

On the same day that the five justices signed the letter with Billop that was sent to Fenwicke, they prepared one containing grave charges against Billop, to be sent to Governor Andros. It follows:

“Minute of the Court at New Castle of Sundry Matters to be Laid Before Gov. Andros on His Arrival from England and Deputing Mr. Moll to Submit the Same.

“By the Court of y^e. Towne of N. Castle. Itt being taken into Consideracon that severall necessary buisnesses Relating to y^e welfare of this Towne of New Castle and the parts adjacent ought to bee demonstrated to his Hono^r. the Governo^r. att his arrivall from England. . . .”

Then follow the consideration of eleven matters, and lastly serious charges are brought against Billop, as follows:

“12 To Represent & make his hono^r acquainted wth actions & proceedings of y^e Commander Cap^t. Billop here since his hono^{rs} departure, so that y^e poore People may not bee oppressed, and the Court may know for y^e future y^e Right meaning and extent of y^e Commanders Commission, The Cheef of w^{ch} s^d Commanders actings briefly mencōned,

1st. That y^e s^d Commander att his first Comming here and all along hath publicqly blamed and defamed y^e Governo^r and alsoe that hee the Commander contrary to his duty stands up for and holds wth Mayo^r fenwike, w^{ch} hath so amased y^e Inhabitants of ye Eastern Shoare that Some of them know not whome to Obey;

2nd. To know whether y^e s^d Commander hath power over y^e Court to Comand them and the Lyke as hee in Severall Speeches hath declared;

3^d. To take a Coppy and to p^rsent to his hono^{rs} view what in y^e Records y^e 8th. of March Laest Entered downe Conserving s^d Commander;

4th. To desire his hono^r to Explaine whether hee, y^e s^d Capt. Billop hath acted Lawfully to take y^e peoples goods out of their houses, w^{ch} they had gott out of Maryland for old debts due for cattle sold to y^e Marylanders, and wth out any manner of Lawfull proceedings to keepe the same and to Convert them to his owne use, the p^rsons whome hee hath taken s^d goods being Lasse, Jan Boelsen, Andries Boen etc, and humbly to Intreat his s^d hono^r in y^e behalfe of y^e People that that and other y^e Lyke buisnesse might bee examined and the Goods Returned to them;

5th. & Laestly, To make his hono^r acquainted that hee the s^d Commander hath from tyme to tyme taken up and made sale of unmarkt hoghs, horses, & mares, as alsoe of stray markt horses; for Instance one horse of doctor Tymen one of Caspares herman, one markt mare taken out of Cap^t. Cantwells Pasture and Sould to M^r. James Coursey in Maryland for 1200 lb of tobb. and Severall hoghs had of doctor Tymen & Jan Staalcop. To ye End his Roy^{ll}. highnesse may have his due out of the above said creaturs, and further to desire his hono^r to know whether y^e s^d Commander hath power to grant Lycenses for Marriage, as to severall p^rsons hee hath done, whereby y^e Common Course of 3 proclamations in y^e church or beames setting up is Laid aside, Given under o^r hands In New Castle this 17th of July A: 1678;

E. Cantwell,

In^o. Moll.

Pieter Alrichs.

Fop. Outhout.

Jean Paul Jacquet.

Garret Otto.

By order of the Co^{rt}.

Eph: Herman.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 12, p. 607.

The first part of the following petition relates to a grant of land; the second part to the actions of Billop:

To the Right Honorable S^r. Edmond Andross Knight Barron: & Governo^r Genrale of all his Royal Highness his teritories in America;

The petittion of Andres Paulson Humble Shewith,

.

“Furthermore yo^r petition^r hath a mare Running in ye woods with two coult^s, by her side one of the last yeare & ye other of this yeare, which by reason ye petitione^r hath ben impeaded & they have been astray in ye woods so y^t y^e coult^s were unmarked, butt ye mare owned the said Coult^s, as severall can attest, Nottwithstanding which when ye mare & coult^s was brought into Newcastle, Cáp^t. Christopher Billop although told by severall whose mare & coult itt was (& that they had seen the said Coult^s suck ye mare which belonged to yo^r petition^r) Did contrary to the knowledge of yo^r. petition^r cause ye oldyest coult to be marked for the King & immediately sould the said coult to John Ogle which is to ye greatt loss & hindrans of yo^r petittion^r being a poor man & greatt family, where for y^r petition^r humbly prays yo^r hono^r to consider his condition on both sides so y^t he may nott be defrauded of his land nor coult butt may have an order from yo^r hono^r peacably & quietly to Injoy them both.

And yo^r petition^r for yo^r Hono^r
shall pray as in Duty bound.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 12, p. 613.

SIR JOHN WERDEN TO GOVERNOR ANDROS
(Billopp dismissed the service.)

Sir

Your freshest lrês are of the 14th & 16th September and of y^e 12 Octob^r (78) and they are lately come to my hands; His R^{ll} H^{ss} p^rused y^m himselfe and I believe intended to have given me his cômands in all particulars therein mencôned to have beene sent you by me of y^e first ships bound for your parts; but still one day hath followed another without affording time for it, save only in one poynt, and y^t too I thinke hath beene brought to its conclusion rather by y^e importunity and unreasonablenesse of Capt. Billopp's father, than through any harshnesse in y^e Duke's disposition towards him. M^r Billopp (as you will see by y^s peticôn) hath pretended y^t your usage of his son hath beene very hard; and y^s complaint engaged y^e Duke to see those parts of yo^r letters wherein you give an acc^t of his greate and long neglect of his duty, and thereupon y^e Duke not doubting yo^r ability or integrity to judge of y^t in your inferior Offic^r, hath thought fitt not only to approve yo^r suspension of his employm^t, but hath ordered it to be given to Capt. Salisbury; as you will p^rceive by

y^e enclosed cômmission to him. I have neverthelesse assured Mr. Billopp y^t if he or his son have any just cause to complaint agst you, relateing any ways to him properly or to common justice, y^t His R^{ll} H^{ss} will always be ready to heare him, and will expect yo^r justification to any particular charge of y^t nature. Dated at St James's y^e 10th of March 1678/9.

To Sir Edmund Andros Kn^t &c.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 3, p. 276.

SIR JOHN WERDEN TO GOVERNOR ANDROS

Windsor 24th May 1680.

Sir

I have rec^d yo^{rs} of y^e 10th and 15th February last but shall not need to answer y^m now very particularly, because it being y^e Duke's pleasure to have you repaire hither as soone as you can, I hope yⁿ to have better opportunitys for those and other matters.

As to ye rest, I meane w^t relates to your behaviour in your governem^t, whether ariseing from complaints of some private men, or anger of y^e Quakers, or Captⁿ Billop or from suggestions of yo^r favoring Dutchmen before English in trade [etc]

I need not inlarge further at y^s time, but hopeing you will 'ere long be wth us, I remaine,

Sir, Yours &c

To Sir Edm^d Andros &c

J. W.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 3, p. 284.

After his quarrel with Gov. Andros, Billop returned to England and reentered the navy, but was shortly back in America again, for in the *New Jersey Archives, 1st Series*, Vol. XXI, p. 45, under date of November 26, 1681, there is mention of a special Court of Oyer and Terminer to be held at Woodbridge, called at the "request of Captain Christopher Billop."

As appears in the *Record 1680, Richmond County*, and copied by Stillwell in his *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany*, and from the *Court and Road Records, 1668-1766*, preserved in Kings County Clerk's Office, Long Island, Billop was before some court or other very often in 1681.

In the first of the trials held on Staten Island, recorded in the old book referred to, it will be noted that ear marks for Capt.

Billop's cattle are given. These do not agree with those given in another part of the old book. No exact date accompanies this record, which is as follows:

“Cp^t Bilups Mark with A Crop on the Right ear and two hapenes in ech sid of the same and A slitt down the Left ear.”

Billop may have changed his ear marks, as was sometimes done.

Pigs

Markey Desway examined Be foor the Court upon A Complaint of Christopher Bilups Confeseth that he marked fouer small piges of A strang sow two for him self and two for the Deike [Duke?] examened on the 3 day of october 1681.

The examination of witneses upon A Complaint of Capt Christopher Bilop The Testemony of Briont Bukoth Aged 36 years or ther A Bouts testefieth that in the year 1680 he saw A sow of Cap^t Bilups Mark with 4 fouer small piges furder this deponont saieth that In the fall insewing he saw Markos Desway Mark two shoots on for him self and two for the Duke of the seam Coler of the mof Capt Bilops and to the Best of my knowleg By neaterll Markes the must Be of the seam Sow And furder saieth not.

The Testem of Richard James Aged 22 years or ther A Boutes testefieth that in the year 1681 he saw A sanded sow with Blak and whit spotes with four small piges on sande on whit on Blew on Blake and this deponiont saw thes swin in Compeny withe the swin of Markes deswai and often A Bout his hous and furder saith that he herd the soon of frances Barber say that they war Capten Bilups he saith he Asked the sone of Markes wt^h he Markd Capten Bilups hoges he Ansored what will you Meake A theef of my father further saieh not

The testimony of Antone founten Aged 30 years of ther A Bouts Testefieth that in the year 1680 he saw a Blak spotted sow with fuor small piges 3 Blakesh sanded and on whit furder saieth not this deponiont that Briont Bukwoth and Christeper Jacobes sayd thay war Capten Bilopes hoges the sow Being Marked with A Crop on the lef ear and A hapeney two of the piges Marked of Markes desway Marke and the other two Cropt and furder saieth not.

depending Betwixt C. Bilups and seue Jenoue [in margin].

The Testemony of Antony founten Aged 35 year or ther A Bouts Testefieth that he saw steuen Jenanaue Kill A Boor in the year 1680 like that which Christopher Jacobe and Briont Bukworth said was Capt Billup and funder saith not.

This Testemony sworne Befoor Justes Stillwell on the 3 day of october 1681.

OBADIAH HULMES.

—*Stillwell's Miscellany*, vol. 1, pp. 7–8.

BILLOP PAYS TWO POUNDS AND COSTS

At A Court held on stat[en] Island By the Constabl and ouersears of the seam on this presont Munday Being the 5 day of november 1681. Peter Balew Plf in A Action of Capt Christopher Bilop Deft the Caues whar As the Caues depending Betwixt the P and Deft hath Bin heard the Plf proueth his detlelaration to the ualeu of 2 pound the Courte ordreth the deft to pay the debt with Cost of sewt.—*Stillwell's Miscellany*, vol. 1, p. 6.

Peter Balew having had such good success in his suit against Billop in the November court, whereby he recovered two pounds, tried again the following month, this time over the “Damnefied” Nett. On this occasion the proceedings were much longer and more complicated, as appears from the testimony.

THE “DAMNEFIED” NETT

Beter Balew Plf

Christopher Billup Deft

To the worshepfull Court held on staton Island By the Constabll and ouersears of the seam The Plf most humbly sh—eth [blotted out] that the deft Boroed A nett of Me A Bouts thre years past Pretending greet want for A presont soeplly for his famely But the deft neuer Returned the nett untill It was soe damnefied that was not for sarues whar upon I Returned such Anser that I would Reseue It in such A Condition Being still detained to my greett dameg wich Causeth Me to Bring my seut to this Court Craueing Jugment Against the deft with Cost of sewt and such dameges as you shall think Resonabll

desember the

obadiah Hulmes

4 day 1681

Clake.

witnesses sworn in the Caus depending [between] Peter Balew and Christopher Bilup.

John Briges Aged 30 years or thear A Boutes testefieth that he Brought the nett to Peter Balews But he would not Reseue it in that Condition I was fain to Telle him I would Call for it as I Cam Bake But I did not Intend It furder saith not.

The Testemony of Briont Bukworth Aged 30 years or ther A Bouts Testefieth that neett Boroed of Peter Balew But A small Mater did mend it so that we Cecht fish Anough for our oune yous But After when It was Returned the Roopes was Lost and the neett torn furder saith not

The Testemony of Tis Barns Aged 60 years or ther A Bouts Testefieth that Balew hired him to mend his net and stopt sum holes and put in A new Cod and thear was soe Much Bauken Roop as A Man Could Care furder saith not

The Testemony of John Corbett Aged 27 years or ther A Bouts saith that thay fisht wit the net of Balews and Maintained the wole famely untill it was torn that we Could fish noe Longer the neet was at the Plantation A Bouts two years furder saith not

The Testemony of Christopher Jacobs Aged 35 years or A Bouts testefieth that when we fisht with the neet of Balew we mended soom holes But After we Cecht fish for the famely But we war fain to mend It often the Roopes war small I Jug thay war nott worth A Boue 10 shileeg furder saith not

sworn Befoor me

Richard Stillwell Justes.

By order of the Court

Obadiah Hulmes,
Clarke.

—*Stillwell's Miscellany*, vol. 1, p. 8.

“TONGUE TO LONG FOR HIS CHOPES”

John Corbete Aged 26 years or ther A Boutes, testefyeth that as Briont was Meaking A stak of Corn and Christopher Jacobes said to Capten Bilup that he had Bought 15 swin of the men when he had Kiled som of them befor and Bilup swore to Christopher that his tonge was to long for his Chopes Christopher said it should Be longer It this was A Bout the time when obadiah hulmes and danell stillwell sould two to Capt Bilup

sworn Be foor me

Richard stillwell Justis.

on the 6 day of desember 1681.

—*Stillwell's Miscellany*, vol. 1, p. 33.

CAPTAIN BILLOP CUTS OFF THE PIGS EARS

Briont Bukoth Aged 30 year or ther A Bouts thestefieth that he kiled sow Marked with A Crop on the Right ear and A slitt in the Lef ear By Capten Bilupes order the winter be Befoor he sould two goones to obadiah Hulmes and danell stilwell. Christopher Jacobes spok to me to me to tak nottes of the of the Mark for we may be Cald in question hear After It was Aither obadhs or danell stillw * * and Afort I kiled thre in the two—ka—hous and as soon as thay war kiled Capt Bilop Cott of thair ears
—*Stillwell's Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 34.

A CROP OF WHEAT

in the West Ryding of Yorkshire
Long Island by his Ma^{ties} Authority beginning on the
21st day decemb' 1681

Present.

- Mr. John Younges High Sheriffe
- Mr. Stephanus Van cortlandt President
- Mr. James Hubbard } Justices
- Mr. Elbert Elberts }
- Mr. Richard Betts
- Mr. Richard Stillwell

The constables called over who }
all appear wth. their staves. }

- Accons called over
- Juro^{rs} sworne
 - Wm Merrit
 - Rob^t Blackwell
 - Edward Steevenson
 - Content Titus
 - Wm Morris
 - Roeloff Martisen
 - Robert Field

[21 day decemb' 1681]

- Christopher Billop plt. }
- John Bridges deft }

The plt. declares against the deft in an Accon of Debt to the value of £28.13.6½ and produces severall Acco^{ts} to prove the same—as also an Acco^t from the defend^t.

one Bill of 12^{lb} from the deft to y^e plt was under hand and seal and the other sworne to before Mr W^m Beekman Deputy Mayor which makes up the said sum of 28.13.6½. Bryan Buckworth, and Jn^o Corbet deposed—Bryan Buckworth declares yt Mrs. Ann Billop to the best of his Knowledge bought a crop of wheat of the deft for w^{ch} shee was to allow him 8^{lb} and that Cap^{ta}. Billop gave the said serv^t of Bridges Leave to goe a Gunning after hee was a prisoner. Jn^o Corbet declares that the servant came to Capt. Billop but was not there when hee made his Escape.

The matter being committed to a Jury they find for the plt that the deft shall pay the plt the sum of 10^{lb} four shillings & two pence wth cost. The co^{rt}. agrees wth the Verdict of the Jury and gave Judgm^t accordingly. The deft mov'd the co^{rt}. for a Reviw w^{ch} was granted.

Execucon issued July 1682 direct: to y^e H. Shr. of Yorkshire on Long Island his Dep. or any other whom it may concern. del'd to Mr. Jn^o. Jorions.

—*Court and Road Records, 1668–1766, Kings County, p. 144.*

Billop as we have seen, was much engaged during the latter part of 1681 in numerous disputes in court with his neighbors, but to one used to real battles at sea, these experiences may have seemed but tame affairs. Among his other transactions he found time in October, 1681, to purchase from Peter Johnson whatever claim he might have to land at Bentley. It appears that on October 10, 1674, just one month before he vacated in favor of the English, Anthony Colve, Governor-General under the Dutch rule, granted to Peter Johnson a neck of land of about 200 acres “over against Amboye.” Governor Andros in 1676 paid no attention to the Dutch grant of 1674 when he granted the same land to Billop. On the 1687 survey for the Manor of Bentley, Philip Wells shows land belonging to William Johnson and another tract belonging to Peter Johnson, to the eastward of Billop's land, near Regreniers Creek, now known as Lemon Creek, but it will be seen, owing to location and date, that the land purchased by Billop must have been near, or at the place where the present house stands. Peter Johnson, therefore, appears to have

been the first owner of the point “over against Amboye.” The following is from the records in the office of the New York Secretary of State where the paper is recorded, *Deeds* 5: 322:

This Following writeing was
Recorded For Cap^t Christopher
Billop Octob^{er} the 20th: 1681

Translation.

Laid out For Peter Johnson Goanus and Sonn and Likewise John Johnson one Parcell of Land Laying at the south west of Staten Island Ending with the west Side at the Kill, with the South Side the Bay greate one hundred Morgan Item one parcell of meaddow to the south Side of the Fresh Kill or Creeke greate thirty morgan 1674 October 10th: Signed

Ja Corteljau Sworne Sur:

These Presents wittneseth that I Peter Johnson of the Goanes upon Long Island have Sould made Over and granted unto Cap^t. Christopher Billop all my whole title and Interest Claime or Other Pretences to a Neck of Land upon Staten Island Lyeing and Being upon the south west End of said Island over against Amboye and that For et valuable Consideracion payd by the said Billop to me in Hand I Doe utterly Renounce my whole Interest of any part or parcell of the aforesaid marke of Land as Wittnesse my hand and Seale in the yeare of o^r Lord 1681

Signed Sealed and DD:

The mark X of Peter
Johnson. (seal)

in the presence off

Antho Brockholls

Abraham Man

Also among the records in the office of the New York Secretary of State, at Albany, there is a “Letter of attorney” to Billop from Silvestor Widmore, and a record of sale from him to William Billop, of New York.

This following Lre of Att
ourney Recorded for Cap^t
Xtopher Billop the 25th: of Octo^r
1681

Nevis

Know all men by these presents that I Silvestor Widmore of Nevis aforesaid Victualer have made Ordained Constituted au-

thorized and Appointed and in my stead and place by this presents Doe make ordaine Constitute authorize and appointe my trustie Friend Capt^t. Christopher Billop to be my true and Lawfull Attour'ny for me and in my name and to my prop^{er} use and Behoof to aske Demand Sue for Levy Require recover and Receive of and from Mr. Isaac Meline in Newyorke or Elsewhere all such summe and summes of mony Goods Wares and Merchandizes Whatsoever Due owing or Belonging unto me whether [26] the same be by Bond Bill Booke accomp^t. Reckoning word or promise or by any other wayes or meanes whatsoever Giveing and by these presents Granting unto my said Attour'ny full power and Lawfull Authority in the premisses to act for me as Aforesaid the said Isaac Meline Refusing to make sattisffaccon to sue arrest Implead Imprison and out of prison to Deliver and upon Sattisfaccon made or any parte thereof Sufficient Acquittances or other Lawfull Discharges to make seale and Deliver Attornyes one or more under him to substitute and Generally all other act and acts thing and things needful and neccessary in the premisses to Doe Execute Rattifying and allowing all and whatsoever my said Attourney shall Lawfully Doe or Cause to be Done in and aboute the premisses by Virtue of these presents In Wittnesse whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seale the tenth Day of June Annoq^{ue} R^x. Car. Sedi Augt &c tricesimo tertio Annoq^{ue}: Dom: 1681

Signed sealed and

Delivered in the presence of. Silvester Widmore. (seale)

Andrew Pedder

Robert Hall.

Newyorke 21st: Octob^{er}: 1681

The within written Andrew Pedder wittnesse to this Letter of Attourney appeared Before me and made Oath that he saw the within written Silvester Widmore Seale and Deliver the same for the use therein mentcioned:

Sworne Before me the
Day above written:

W^m Beekeman

Deputy Mayo^r.

—Office N. Y. Secretary of State, *Deeds* 5: 325, 326.

Recorded for Mr. William
Billop the 9th: Nov^r: 1681

Know All men by these presents that I Christopher Billop of Sttaten Island in the Collony of Newyorke in America Gentleman ffor Divers Good Causes and Valluable Consideracions me hereunto moveing as alsoe ffor and in Considercion of the full and Just summe of three hundred and ffifty pounds to me in hand payed and secured to be payed per Bills of Exchange for England By W^m. Billop now Ressident in Newyorke the Receipt whereof I Doe Hereby Acknowledge. And therefrom Doe Acquitt and Discharge the said W^m. Billop his Heires and Assignes for Ever Have Given Granted Bargained Sould Assigned and made Over and by these presents Doe give Graunt Bargaine Sell Assigne and make Over unto the said W^m. Billop his heirs and Assignes All my Right title Intrest property Clayme and Demand of in or to the Within Mentionned Tract of Land Ground and Meadow As also all my Right tittle Interest property Clayme and Demand of in or to all the House Gardens Orchards or any other Improvem^{ts}. made by me or my Assignes on the said grounds or meadow together with one Cart one plow one Horse and one Harrow one plow Chain one [328] Paire of Draught Oxen Fouer Cowes, two this year Calves one Bull fouer young Cattle, Come two years old this spring. To Have and to Hold all and singuler the within Mentionned Tracte of Land and Meadow together with all and singuler the above mencionned Premisses with Every part and parcell thereof unto him the said W^m. Billop his Heires and Assignes to the only proper use and Behoofe of him the said W^m. Billop his Heires and Assignes for Ever, He the said W^m. Billop his Heires or Assignes paying yearely unto his Roy^{ll}. High^s. use such Quitt Rents as shall be Due according to Law. In wittnesse whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seale this fourth Day of Nov^r: in the yeare of o^r. Lord God 1681

Sealed and Delivered
in the presence off us
Antho: Brockholls
John Robinson
John Tudor

Chris. Billop (seale)

—Office N. Y. Secretary of State, *Deeds* 5, 328–329.

We now come to the events which took place after Billop had once more gone to England, and before his reappearance on Staten Island to receive the Bentley Manor Patent of 1687.

GOVERNOR DONGAN TO SIR JOHN WERDEN

New York, Feb. 18th 1684

Honored Sir

Yours of the 26th Aug^t came to my hands but three days since by Martin who arrived at Amboy.

Billop's Plantation is opposite to Amboy and, if vessells bee permitted to come there, and not enter at New York, it will bee impossible to hinder y^e putting goods ashore on Staten Island. There was a report that hee intended to sell it to one of East Jersey, I think it would doe well if you please to look into the last patent of East Jersey to see whether shipping bee obliged if they come into Sandy-Hook to make entry at New York, the Quakers making continal pretences to Staten Island disturbs the people, more than 200 familyes are setted on it. And in case His Royal Highness cannot retrieve East Jersey, it will doe well to secure Hudson's River and take away all claim to Staten Island.

Serv^t Tho: Dongan.

—*Documents, Colonial History N. Y.*, Vol. 3, p. 356.

SIR JOHN WERDEN TO GOVERNOR DONGAN

St James's 27th Augst 1684

You say Cap^t Billop will sell his plantacôn on Staten Island, and if he doe, certainly 'tis best y^t you endeavo^r to procure some inhabitant of New Yorke rather to buy it yⁿ suffer any of those of New Jersey to doe it; but whosoever buys land in y^t island, it being under yo^r governem^t, he must be lyable (as well as others) to the Laws thereof.

For Coll: Dongan &c.

—*Documents, Colonial History N. Y.*, Vol. 3, p. 350.

BILLOP SEIZES A SHIP

Abstract of Wills on file in the Surrogate's Office, City of New York.

Liber 19 B. "This Book, like Liber 14 A, is composed of Wills and documents of an early date." Wm. S. Pelletreau.⁴

Page 71

To the Sheriff of New York or Water Bailiff. You are, in his Majesty's name, required to attach, in the hands of Mr John Imans, or any other person, within your Precinct, thirty-eight negro slaves lately taken and carried away by Captain Christopher Billop, from on board the ship "Providence," of London, George Nauter, Master, being on her voyage from Angola to Nevis, and by him sent to this place, consigned to John Imans. Which ship and negroes did belong to and were the proper estate of Mr. John Bawdon, of London, Mr. John Temple and Mr. Thomas Temple, citizens and goldsmiths, of London. And if the said negroes are sold you are to attach the effects or produce of them in such place as the same shall be. So that you have the negroes or the produce at the next Court to be held in the City Hall. Wherein fail not, May 4, 1683.

William Beekman, Dep. Mayor.

By virtue of said attachment I did on the 5th instant attach in the hands of Mr. John Imans the said negroes. And being informed that some of the effects or produce of some of said negroes, were shipped on board the ship "Charles," Robert Codenham, master, I, the same day repaired on board the ship and inquired for the master who, not being on board, I did publically, upon the Deck of said vessell, read the attachment in the presence of the mate and the boatswain, and did attach all such goods, to witt, 40 barrels and 24 half-barrels of flour, and 8 hogsheads of bread, but the vessel sailed without delivering said goods.

May 15, 1683.

John Collier, Sheriff.

The following copied from photostats from the Office of the N. Y. Secretary of State where the papers are recorded. *Deeds* 7: 11, 12, 13, 14

⁴ *Coll., N. Y. Historical Society*, 1893, p. 436.

This following Depositions and
Letter of Attourny Recorded for
Mr. John West the 5th. Day of June 1683

To all that shall see these Presents or have them to be Read
Sr. William Prichard Knight Lord Mayor and the Alderman of
the City of London Send Greeting Know yee that on the Day of
the Date hereof in the Kings Ma^{ties} Court holden before us in the
Chamber of the Guildhall of the said City Personally Came and
Appeared William Cooke Late Chyrurgion and W^m Dodson Late
Chiefe Mate of the Shipp or Vessell Called the Providence
George Nauter Ma^{er}. of Competent Age being Persons well
knowne and worthy of Good Creditt and Did by Solemne Oath
which they Severally tooke upon the holy Evangelists of
almighty God at the instance and Request of Mr John Bawden of
London Merchant before us then and there Solemnly Declare
testify and Depose for Certaine and Undoubted truth that on the
fifth day of June last past Cap^t. Christopher Billop Commander
of his Ma^{ties} Ketch the Deptford meeting with the said Ship the
Providence off the Island of St Christopher. Did there by Force
of Armes Seize and take the said Ship Providence being then on
her Voyage from Angola bound for the Isl^d of Nevis with A
Loading or Cargo of two hundred and Seaventene Negroes, be-
sides Elephants teeth Copper Dyeing wood and Linnen all which
Said two hund^d and seaventene Negroes (Except nine) together
with the said Shipp were belonging (as they these Deponents
always understood) to the Said John Bawden and to John
Temple and Company of London Goldsmiths Further these De-
ponents Say and Depose that upon the Seizure of the said Ship
the Providence the said Cap^t Billop Caused these Deponents to
be taken out of the said Ship and putt on board his Ma^{ties} Said
Ketch and their Detained Prisoners but before the said Ship the
Providence was Carried into Nevis The place where she and her
said Cargoe were Condemned the Said Cap^t. Christopher Billop
as these Deponants were Informed Did imbeazle and Convey
away out of the Shipp to Sundry places about the number of
one hundred Negroes besides A Considerable part of the rest of
the Cargoe Some of which Negroes soe by him Conveyed away
Deponents understood were Sold att Saint Christopher Others
Sent to Mounseirratt and Some other parte thereof Sent to New
Yorke, And that the said Cap^t. Billop might Carry on his De-

signe of Conveying away the said Negroes with the Greater Privacy the Brother of the said Cap^t. Billop Gave monyes to Some of the Seamen as a Reward to Conceale the Same and particularly to Gabriel Cleere and Jenkin Thomas as they Informed them these Deponents of Nevis And wee the said Lord Mayor and Aldermen Doe hereby further Certifie that the said Mr John Bawden together with Mr John Temple and Mr. Thomas Temple Declared before us that they have made and Constuted Mr. John West of New York Gentleman their trusted and Lawful Attorney and procurator for the purposes in A Certaine Letter of Attourny or Procuration by these now Produced beareing Date with these presents which for more Evidence they Did now before us And in pressence of Josiah Jones Notary Pub: Dwelling in this Citty Seale and Deliver as their Act and Deed to the use of the said Mr. West as thereby Appears in faith and Testimony where of wee the said Lord Mayor and Aldermen have Caused the Seale of the Office of Maiorality of the said City of London to be hereunto putt and Affixed and the said Procuration to be hereunto Annexed Dated in London the 17th Day of November Anno Dom 1682 And in the fouer and thirtieth yeare of the Reigne of our Soverigne Lord King Charles the second of England

Wagstaffe
(seale)

By this Publik Instrum^t of Procuracion or Letter of Attourny be it knowne and manifest unto all people that on the 19th Day of the month of October Anno Dom 1682 And in the fouer and thirtieth yeare of the Reigne of our Soverigne Lord Charles the Second by the Grace of God King of England Scotland ffrence and Ireland Defender of the faithe Before me Josiah Jones Notary and Tabelion Publick by Authority of our said Soverigne Lord the King Admitted and Sworne Dwelling in the Citty of London And in the presence of the wittnesses after named Personally appeared Mr. John Bawden of London aforesaid Merchant and Mr. John Temple and Mr. Thomas Temple Cittizens and Goldsmiths of London to me notary well knowne, which appeared Declared that Whereas Cap^t. Christopher Billop Commander of [14] Of his Ma^{ties}. Ketch the Depthford Did Lately Seize upon and Carry into the Road of the Island of Nevis the shipp or Vessell Called the Providence of London George Nauter

Ma^r. with her Cargoe of Negroes and other Merchandize belonging to them the said Appeazers in the Prosceucion of her Voyage from Angola to Nevis Aforesaid, and after Seizure thereof Did Imbeazle Conceale and Convey away Severall of the said Negroes and other Merchandizes illegally without Condemnacion thereof and perticularly Eight and thirty Negroes besides other Merchandizes which he these Cap^t. Billop Did send and Consigne to John Inians att New Yorke in America, Therefore they the said Appeazers have made Ordained and in their stead and Places have putt and Constituted And by these presents Doe make Ordaine Constitute, And in their and Every of their Steads and Places Doe put and Constitute John West of New Yorke Aforesaid Gent: to be their and Every of their true and Lawfull Attourny Giveing unto him full power Authority and Speciall Charge for in the names and to the use of them Constituants and every of them, to aske Demand Leavy Sue for Recover receive and take out of the hands possession or Custody of the said John Inians, or Such other Person or Persons whatsoever in New Yorke Aforesaid or Else where whom it Doth or may Concerne, as well all and Every the said Eight & thirty Negroes Sent and Consigned to the said John Inians as Aforesaid, As all and Singuler such other Negroes Goods and Merchandizes as shall be found to be of Right due Belonging and Appurteineing to the said Constituants or any of them as being parte or parcell of the Cargoe of Negroes and other Merchandizes Seized by the said Cap^t. Billop [15] On board the Said Shipp Providence as Afores^d. and by him Illegally imbezled and Conveyed away without Condemnacion And in Case of sale or other Disposall of the said Eight and Thirty Negroes or other the said Negroes Goods or Merchandizes soe imbezled & Conveyed away by the said Cap^t. Billop as Aforesaid or of any parte or parcell of the Same, then for and in the names of the said Constituants and to their use to Demand Recover and Receive the full and whole produce of the said Negroes Goods and Merchandizes Soe sold and Disposed of and for and touching the primisses or any parte or parcell thereof to Compound and Agree by Arbitracion or otherwise if and as occassion Shall Require, And to Accompt with and take Accompt of the said John Inians or whomsoever else it Doth or may Concerne in New Yorke Aforesaid or Else where upon the Recoveries and Receipts Compositions and

Agreem^{ts}. Acquittances or other Sufficient Discharges for and in the names of the said Constituants And Every or any of them to make Subscribe Seale And Deliver and having gott Obtained and Received Possession of the said Negroes Goods and Merchandizes or any Parte or Parcell thereof, or of the Produce of the Same then to Dispose thereof According to the orders and Directions of the said Constituants or any of them in that behalfe And for the better and more speedy Affecting the Primisses in Case of Refusall Opposition or Delay therein the said Constituants Doe and Every of them Doth hereby further Authorize and Impower their said Attourny for them and Every of them to Appeare in all Courts and before [16] All Lords Judges and Justices there to Defend answer and Reply to all matters and Causes touching the Primisses and to Persue Implead Seize Sequester Attach Arrest Imprison and to Condemne and out of Prison againe (Whom need shall be) to Deliver likewise One Attourny or more with Like or Limited Power under him to make and Substitute and the same att his pleasure againe to Revoake, And Generally in and Concerning the Primisses and the Dependencyes thereof to Doe say transact and Accomplish all and whatsoever the said Constituants or any of them might or Could Doe Personally although the matter Required more special Authority then herein is Comprized the said Constituants and Every of them Promiseing to have hold Ratifie and allow of as good and valid for Ever all and whatsoever their said Attourny or his Substitutes Shall lawfully Doe or Cause to be Done in and about the Primisses by Virtue of these Presents in **wittnesse** whereof the Said Constituants have hereunto Sett their hands and Seales this Done and Passed in London Aforesaid in the presence of the wittnesses hereunto Subscribed.

Sealed and Delivered by all

the these partyes in the presence of

W^m. Smith Junior

Rcbert ffisher

W^m: Dyre

Sam^{ll}: Massie

John Bawdon (seale)

John Temple (seale)

Tho: Temple (seale)

(seale)

In testimonium veritatis, signum & sigillum

Tabelionatus mei opposui rogatus.

Josi— Jones Not's Pub: =^{cus}

Octob^r. 19th 1682

PETITION OF CAPTAIN BILLOP TO THE KING

To the King's most Excellent Ma^{ty} and the R^t Hono^{ble} the Lords of His Ma^{ts} most Hono^{ble} Privy Council.

The Humble Petition of Cap^t Christopher Billop.
Sheweth.

That Yo^r Pet^r some time in June 1682 as Commander of His Ma^t's Ketch Deptford pursuant to his Ma^{ts} Commandes Seized an enterloper called the Providence of London whereof one George Nantor was Commander, which ship and Neagrees with all that belonged to her was condemned in the Admiralty Court at Neaves for Trading to Guiney contrary to his Ma^{ts} Charter granted the Royall Affrican Company; some time after yo^r Pet^r sent from Neaves to New Yorke some Neagrees with other Goods consigned to M^r John Injons about the month of May 1683, by vertue of a Procuration from M^r John Bauden, John and Thomas Temple of London to Mr John West, Clarke of the Mayor's Court at New Yorke, The said West as Attorney to Banden &^{ca} attached and arrested in the hands of the said Injons all the Neagrees or effects of the said Neagrees which Yo^r Pet^r soe consigned to the said Injons, and, as Yo^r Pet^r shall make appeare to this Board, West illegally, unjustly and contrary to Law, obtained judgment against yo^r Pet^r to the Value of One Thousand One Hundred and fforty pound Ster. from which Judgment Yo^r Pet^{rs} agent desired to appeale to yo^r Ma^{ty} and Councill here which was refused.

Now may it please Your sacred Ma^{ty} That Province being settled as other of Yo^r Ma^{ts} Plantations, being by Laws and Constitutions for the security of yo^r Ma^{ts} Subjects, whereof Yo^r Ma^{ty} reserving appeales to be determined before yo^r Ma^{ty} and Councill.

Yo^r Pet^r most humbly prayes yo^r Ma^{ty} will be graciously pleased to order the Mayor's Court of New Yorke to stop all proceedings and to send over an Appeale. That the Matter may be argued before this Board in Order to a finall Determination.

And Yo^r Pet^r as in duty bound shall ever pray.

A true Copie

[December 23, 1685]

Phil: Musgrave.

—*Documents, Colonial History N. Y.*, Vol. 3, p. 366.

ORDER IN COUNCIL OF CAPTAIN BILLOP'S APPEAL

At the Court at Whitehall the 23^d of December 1685

Present—The Kings most Excellent Majesty
in Council.

Upon reading a Report from the Right Hon^{ble} the Lords of y^e Committee for Trade and Plantations in the words following

May it please Your Ma^{ty}—

In obedience to your Majesty's Order in Council of the 4th of December 1685. Wee have examined the petition of Captain Christopher Billop complaining

.
All which is most humbly submitted.

His Ma^{ty} in Council approving the same, and being graciously pleased to admit of the pet^{rs} Appeal hath this day thought fit to Order That the matter of the said appeal bee, and the same is hereby appointed to bee heard before His Ma^{ty} in Council within four months after notice hereof shall bee given to the Mayor of New York, who is to transmit to this Board an account of all proceedings in his Court relating thereunto. And it is further ordered that in the mean time all Proceedings against the said Capt: Billop or his Agent relating to this matter doe cease; Hee having this day given security here, according to the Report, to answer such Determination in the Appeal, as His Majesty in Council shall award. Whereof the said Mayor of New York, or the Mayor thereof for the time being and all others concerned are to take notice, and give obedience hereunto. And Colonel Thomas Dungan His Ma^{ty}'s Governor of New York is hereby directed to take care and give order that all things bee performed accordingly.—*Documents, Colonial History N. Y.*, Vol. 3, pp. 366–367.

Another record concerning Capt. Billop after he had once more gone to sea is to be found in the *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts*, Aug. 19, 1682: "Petition. Edmund Gibbons for an execution against Christopher Billop."

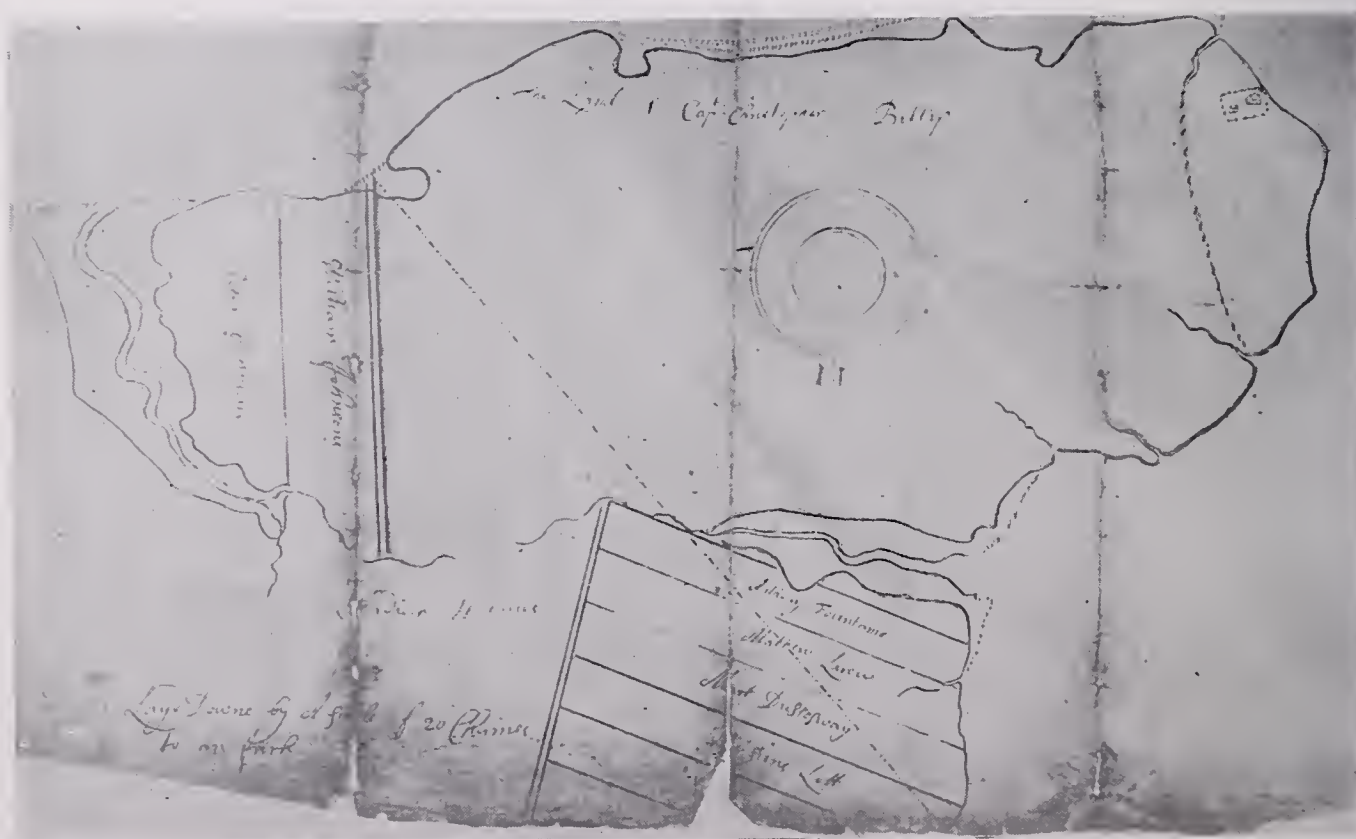
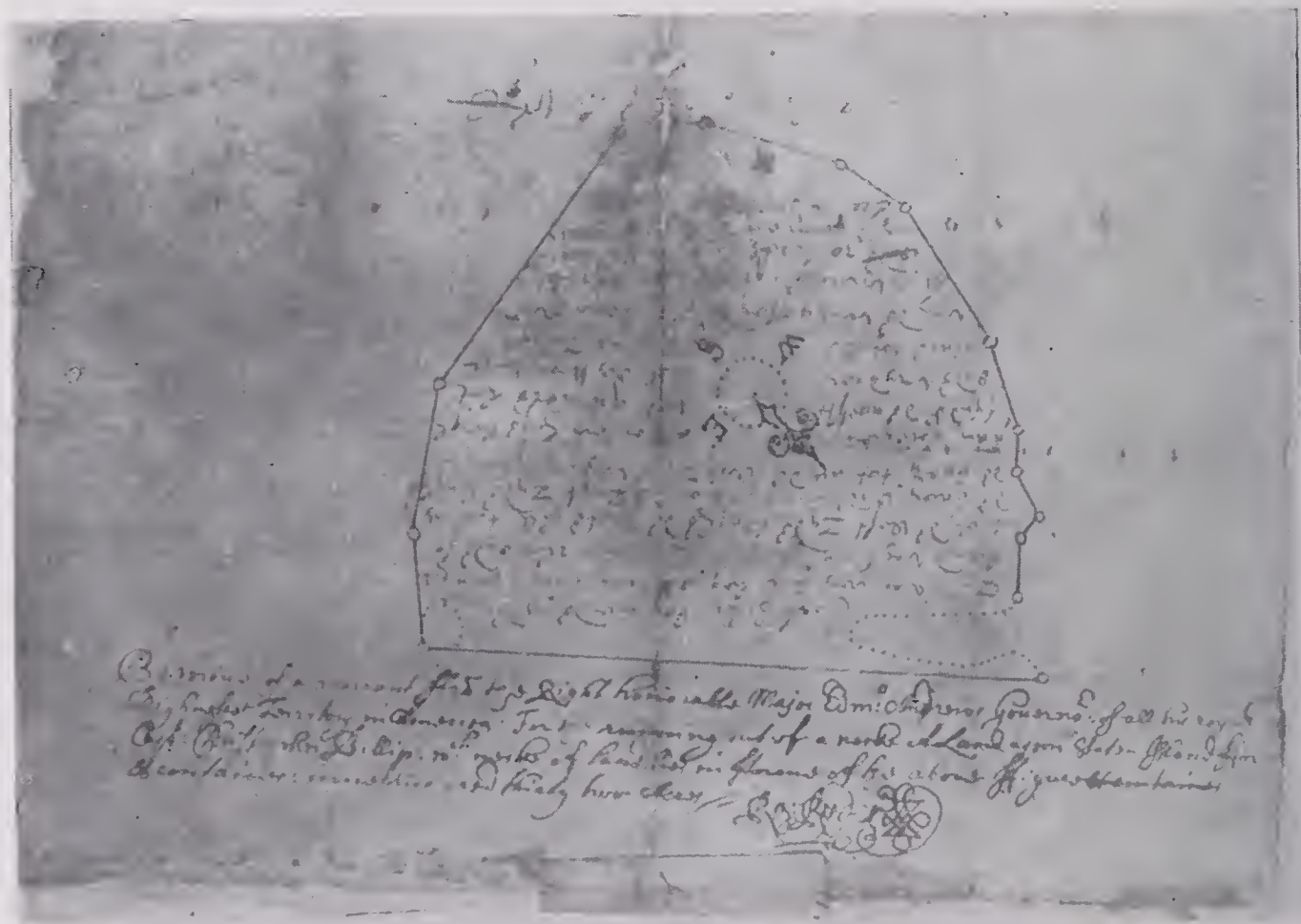
With the coming of Thomas Dongan as governor of the Province of New York, it is evident that Billop was more likely to receive favors than from Governor Andros, whose recall he had helped to bring about. Accordingly in June, 1687, he received

what is known as the Manor of Bentley Patent for 1,600 acres of land. This patent included the land conveyed in the patent of 1676, and embraces in a general way all of the land west of the present Sharrott Ave. up to Pleasant Plains, thence westward to what is now the junction of the Amboy Road and Valley Road, and so on the north side of Mill Creek to Staten Island Sound. This patent, like that of 1676, is copied from Mr. Tuttle's article in the *Pro. Staten Island Inst. Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 1. p. 27.

Record 6 Patents 229–234 (Old p. 230–234) (Bentley Manor patent 1687)

Recorded for Cap^t. Christopher Billop

Thomas Dongan Cap^t. Gen^l. Govern^r. in Chiefe and Vice Admirall in and over the Province of New Yorke and Territoryes Depending thereon in America under his most Sacred Majesty James the Second by the Grace of God King of England Scotland ffraunce and Ireland Defender of the faith etc: To all to whom these Presents shall come Sendeth Greeting Whereas Phillip Welles Esq Surveyor Generall hath by my Order Surveyed and Layd out for Cap^t. Christopher Billop a Certaine Neck of Land being Scituate and Lyeing upon the West end of Staten Island in the County of Richmond and knowne by the Name of . . . Beginning upon the North side of a Creeke Opposite to the Land of Gabriel Minvielle and to the South of the Highway left by the Land of Anthony ffountaine Crossing the Creeke and so Runns by the maine River to the Bay and so by the Bay to A Pond by the Highland next to Regroons Creeke to a marked Tree upcn the Beach and on the East side of the Pond and so Stretching in Woods by a Line of Marked Trees which is the West Bounds of the Land of William Johnson North halfe a Point Westerly Seventy Chains to a Small Brooke which is the South Bounds of the Land of Obadiah Holmes and so by the Runn but upon a Streight Line Westerly to the Southeast Corner of the Land of Anthony ffountaine and so by the Highway marked out by his Land to the River or Sound where first begunn including all the Meadow about the Creeke Except three Acres belonging unto the Land of Anthony ffountaine the whole being bounded to the North by the Land of Obadiah Holmes and Anthony ffountaine to the West by



SURVEYS FOR CAPTAIN BILLOP, ROBERT RYDER, 1676? PHILLIP WELLS, 1687

After Tuttle

the River or Sound to the South by the Bay and to the East by the Land of William Johnson the whole Contained within the aforerecited Bounds both Hills Valleys Swamps Marshes and Meadows Containes one thousand six hundred Acres and Likewise to have thirty acres of Salt Meadow to be Layd out in that Body of Meadows Against Smoaking Point neer the fresh kills And Whereas the said Christopher Billop hath made Application unto me for a Grant of the said Neck of Land Meadow and Premisses under the Seale of the Province and that the before menconed Premisses may be Erected into one Lordship or Mannor Now Know Yee that for Diverse Good and Lawfull Consideracons me thereunto moving and for the Quitt Rent hereafter Reserved I the said Thomas Dongan by Vertue of the Power and Authority to me Derived from his most Sacred Majesty and in Pursuance of the same Have Given Granted Ratified Released and Confirmed and by these Presents Do Give Grant Ratifye Release & Confirme unto the said Christopher Billop his Heires and Assignes all the beforemenconed Neck of Land Meadow and Premisses unto Low Water marke as also all the Messuages Tenements Buildings fences Orchards Gardens Pastures Meadows Marshes Woods Underwoods Trees Timber Quarryes Rivers Rivuletts Brookes Ponds Lakes Streames Creecks Harbours Beaches fishing fowling hawking hunting and Oystering Mines Mineralls (Silver and Gold mines only Excepted) Mills Milne Dams and all the Rights Members Libertyes Priviledges Jurisdiccions Royalties Hereditaments Profitts Advantages & Appurtenances whatsoever to the same belonging or in any wise Appurtenaining or Accepted Reputed taken known or Occupied as Part Parcell or member thereof And Moreover by Vertue of the Commission and Authority to me the said Thomas Dongan Given and the Power in me resideing and for the Reasons and Consideracons above recited I have and by these Presents Do Erect make and Constitute the said Tract and Neck of Land & Premisses with their and every of their Appurtenances into one Lordship and Mannor to all intents and Purposes and the same shall from henceforth be Called the Lordship and Mannor of Bentley and I the said Thomas Dongan have also Given and Granted and by these Presents Do Give and Grant unto the said Christopher Billop his Heires and Assignes full Power and Authority at all times

forever hereafter in the said Lordship and Mannor one Court Leet and one Court Barron to hold and keep at such time and times and so often Yearly as they shall see meet and all fines Issues Amerciaments at the said Court Leet and Court Barron to be holden within the s^d. Lordship and Mannor to be Sett forfeited or Imposed and Payable or happening at any time to be Payable by any of the Inhabitants of or within the said Lordship or Manner of Bentley or the Limitts or Bounds thereof and also all and every the Powers and Authorityes herein beforemenconed for the holding and keeping the said Court Leet and Court Barron from time to time and to award and Issue out the Customary Writts to be Issued and Awarded out of the said Court Leet and Court Barron to be kept by the said Christopher Billop his Heires or Assignes forever or his or their Stewards Deputed & Appointed with full and Ample Power and Authority to Straine For the Rents Services and other Sumes of Money Payable by reason of the Premisses and all other Lawfull remedies and meanes for the having Possessing Receiving Levying and enjoying the Premisses and every Part and Parcell of the same and all wastes Strayes Wrecks Deodands Goods of fellons happening and being forfeited within the said Lordship and Mannor and of all and every Sume and Sumes of Money to be Payd as a Post fine upon any fine or fines to be Levyed of any Lands Tenements or Hereditaments within the said Lordship or Mannor of Bentley together with the Advousen and Right of Patronage and all and every the Church and Churches Erected or to be Erected or Established in the said Mannor And Lastly I the said Thomas Dongan by Virtue of the Power and Authority aforesaid to me Derived and in Pursuance of the Same Do Give and Grant unto the said Christopher Billop his Heires or Assignes that all the Tennants of the said Mannor shall and may at all times hereafter meet together and Choose Assessors within the said Mannor According to such Rules wayes and Methods as are Prescribed for Cittyes Towns and Countyes within the Province by the Acts of the Generall Assembly for the Defraying the Publick Charge of Each respective City Towne and County and all such Sumes of Money so Raised to Collect and Dispose of and for the use aforesaid According as in the said Act of Generall Assembly is Established and Directed To have and to hold all & Singular the said Mannor of Bentley

and Premisses with their and every of their Appurtenances unto the said Christopher Billop his Heires and Assignes forever to the only Propper use benefite and behoofe of him the said Christopher Billop his Heires and Assignes forever to bee holden of his most Sacred Majesty his Heires and Successors in ffree and Comon Soccage According to the tenure of East Greenwich in the County of Kent in his Majestyes Realme of England Yielding Rendring and Paying therefor Yearly and every Yeare forever unto his most Sacred Matye aforesaid his Heires and Successors or to such Officer or Officers as from time to time shall be empowered to Receive the Same if Demanded five Bushells of Good Winter Merchantable Wheate on the five and twentyeth Day of March at the Citty of New Yorke in Liew and Stead of all Services Dutyes and Demands whatsoever In Testimony whereof I have Caused these Presents to be Recorded in the Secryes Office and the Seale of the Province to be hereunto affixed the Sixth Day of May 1687 and in the third Yeare of his Majestyes Reigne

By Comand of his Excye

Is: SWINTON

THO: DONGAN

May it Please yo^r. Excye

The Attorney Gen^l. hath Perused this Patent and finds nothing Contained therein Prejudiciall to his Majestyes Interest

Examd y^e. 6th. July 1687

W: Nicolls

Att a Councill held the 6th. June 1687

Present

His Excye the Gov^r.

Major Brockholls

Major Phillips

Major Cortlandt

Coll Bayard

Judge Palmer

This Patent was Approved off

Is: SWINTON Cl Council

It will be noted that Billop's grant of 1676 apparently went to high water mark only, whereas the Manor grant of 1687 went to low water mark, a very important matter when it came to operating a ferry.

Some of the facts mentioned up to this point in our narrative are briefly reviewed by Mr. Edward C. Delavan, Jr., in "*The Disputed Claim of the Proprietors of East Jersey to Staten Island*," *Proceedings, Staten Island Association of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 3, p. 47, 1909:

"Christopher Billop was in July, 1674, commissioned by Governor Andros second lieutenant of a company of foot (3 *Col. Doc.*, 221); in August, 1676, he desired to give up his commission (*id.*, 239); from August 14th, 1677, to 10 March, 1679, he was commander and subcollector at Delaware Bay; on the latter date he was dismissed in disgrace.* (12 *Col. Doc.*, 580, 581, 584, 593, 594, 595, 599, 607, 613; 3 *Col. Doc.*, 276.) He was still angry with Governor Andros in 1680 (3 *Col. Doc.*, 284), and in 1684 desired to sell his plantation (*id.*, 350) on Staten Island opposite Perth Amboy (*id.*, 356). In December, 1685, after James had ascended the throne, Billop appealed to the King from a judgment of the Mayors Court of the City of New York (*id.*, 365, 366). The Manor of Bentley was created, as we have seen, in 1687."

Under date of Jan. 10, 1687, the '*Calendar of Historical Manuscripts*' shows an order for a commission for Captain Christopher Billopp as surveyor of highways for Staten Island. "The same volume, page 237, shows that on December 5, 1693, he was charged with kicking and beating William Bryan for refusing to sign his indentures. This last item is useful, in that it indicates that he had retired from the Royal Navy after having been for a short time in command of England's finest ship, the *London*, to which . . . he was appointed in June of that very year."⁵

The abstract in the *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts* reads: Dec. 5, 1693. "Deposition. Katharine Welch of the county of Richmond, and Timothy Lee, relative to capt. Christopher Billop kicking and beating Wm. Bryan for refusing to sign his indentures." Dec. 14. "Petition. William Bryan to be discharged from his indentures to capt. Christopher Billop."

* In the *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts* under date of Sept. 24, 1678, p. 74, there is an abstract of a "Minute of the dismissal of capt Billop from his military employment for extravagant speeches, &c."

⁵ *History Thos. and Anne Billopp Farmar*, p. 28.

Lord Macaulay, in the sixteenth chapter of his *History of England*, gives an interesting account of some of Billop's activities while in England. "The Earl of Danby, a bold volatile and somewhat eccentric young man, was fond of the sea, lived much among sailors, and was the proprietor of a small yacht of marvellous speed. This vessel well manned was placed under the command of a trusty officer named Billop, and was sent down the river as if for the purpose of pressing marines. At dead of night, the last night of the year 1690, Preston, Ashton, and Elliott went on board of their smack near the Tower. They were in great dread, lest they should be stopped and searched, either by a frigate which lay off Woolwich, or by the guard posted at the block house at Gravesend, but, when they had passed both frigate and block house, without being challenged, their spirits rose: their appetites became keen: they unpacked a hamper well stored with roast beef, mince pies, and bottles of wine, and were just sitting down to their Christmas cheer, when the alarm was given that a swift vessel from Tilbury was flying through the water after them. They had scarcely time to hide themselves in the dark hole among the gravel which was the ballast of their smack, when the chase was over, and Billop, as the head of an armed party, came on board. The hatches were taken up: the conspirators were arrested, and their clothes were strictly examined. Preston, in his agitation, had dropped on the gravel his official seal and the packet of which he was the bearer. The seal was discovered where it had fallen. Ashton, aware of the importance of the papers, snatched them up and tried to conceal them: but they were found in his bosom.

"The prisoners then tried to cajole or corrupt Billop. They called for wine, pledged him, praised his gentlemanlike demeanour, and assured him that if he would accompany them, nay, if he would only let that little roll of paper fall overboard into the Thames, his fortune would be made. The tide of affairs, they said, was on the turn: things would not go on forever as they had gone on of late; and it was in the captain's power to be as great and as rich as he could desire. Billop, though courteous, was inflexible. The conspirators became sensible that their necks were in imminent danger. . . . Late in the evening the yacht reached Whitehall Stairs; and the prisoners, strongly guarded, were conducted to the Secretary's office."

He was in London in 1701, but appears to have visited America again about the time of the marriage of his daughters, Mary to the Rev. Mr. Brooke, and Anne to Thomas Farmar.

In the *History of St. Peter's Church in Perth Amboy, New Jersey*, p. 37, it is stated that the Rev. John Sharpe, Chaplain of the Fort in New York City, preached at Perth Amboy. He noted in his diary, now in the possession of The Historical Society of Penna.: "Dec. 15 [1704] at Amboy and lodged at Capt. Billops"; and again: "Nov. 10, 1705, guest of Capt. Hamilton and Capt. Billop."

It was also in the year 1704 that Capt. Billop sold the 30 acres of salt meadow near "Smoaking Point," mentioned in his patents of 1676 and 1687.* This deed is recorded in Richmond County, *Deeds B*, pp. 492-495, and reads in part as follows: "This Indenture made the Eleventh day of April in the Third year of the Reigne of our Soverigne Lady Anne by the grace of god over England Scotland france and Ireland Queene defender of the faith &c and in the year of our Lord Christ one thousand seven hundred and four Betweene Cap^t. Christopher Billopp of Staten Island Esq of the one part and John Le Counte Peter Le Counte and James Le Counte the sonns and heirs of Peter Le Counte late of Said Island Deceased and albert Johnson of the said Island yeoman of the other part." The consideration was £70 of New York money, and the amount of land 30 acres of meadow: "Situate on the north west side of Staten Island nere the fresh kills against Smoaking point being in seaverall Lotts or peices lying among A great Quanty of bogg and sunk marsh which begineth at the South west branch of the freash meadows where itt Joyneth to y^e Sound thence southward along the Sound to Jacob De Musfes Creeke thence up along Jacob De Musfes Creeke as it Turnes north East to the upland thence along y^e Edge of the upland to the aforesaid south branch of the fresh Kills Including A penintual Called Eldell Isle as by A Certain Returne or Draft of the said meadow at Large may appear Relation being had to the same" etc.

This deed is not acknowledged before an official on the record, so its place of execution is unknown, and the names of the three

* See also *Calendar of N. Y. Colonial Manuscripts, Land Papers*, July 6, 1687.

witnesses are obscurely transcribed. Probably the clerk did the best he could. Capt. Billop in this instance signed his name "Billopp."

In the *Archives of New Jersey, First Series*, vol. IV, pp. 342--345, there is a copy of a petition dated 1718 and signed by Chris. Billoppe [of Staten Island] and eleven others protesting an act of Assembly passed in New Jersey in 1713, providing that a declaration shall be accepted from Quakers instead of an oath, and enabling them to serve as Jurors and hold office. This petition was, however, as shown by the accompanying memoranda, signed by Billop in London.

Captain Billop was twice married, according to the biographer of the family, Charles Farmar Billopp. His first wife [Anne?] was probably the daughter of Major Farmar. She had two daughters, Mary and Anne. "His second wife was Katharine Farmar, the widow of Jasper Farmar, Jr., whom he married some time between the years 1685 and 1689, as is shown by the following, taken from the *Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd series*, vol. xix, page 33, Feb. 12, 1690. 'At a meeting of the Land Commissioners a patent was signed for Katharine Farmar, *now* Katharine Billopp, for 1250 acres of land, being her former husband, Jasper Farmar's part in the tract of 5.000 acres purchased by Major Farmar.' Katharine bore him no children. She died in 1702, as on page 297 of the last mentioned volume, we are told that on February 20, 1702, Thomas Farmar, her son and heir, asks for a resurvey of her estate."

In the *Sketch of The Old Billopp House Written by One of The Billopps* between 1870 and 1880, contributed to the *Perth Amboy Evening News*, February 13, 1926, by H. E. Pickersgill, it is stated that "A portrait of Captain Billop now in possession of one of his descendants represents him a tall, well made man about fifty years old, dressed in the military costume and wearing the customary large wig of those days curling down upon his shoulders. One side of his face is very much disfigured by a very large dark scar, caused by the explosion of a gun on his own ship during a naval action."

This narrative would not be complete without some record concerning the various commands of this forceful and withal dominating Capt. Billop, so we quote from Charles Farmar Billopp, who quotes from others:

“In the ‘*Biographia Navales*,’ Charnock, vol. i, p. 386, we are informed that Christopher Billopp was, in the year 1671, made a lieutenant in the English Navy, and appointed to the good ship *Portsmouth*, from which ship he was detached, and ordered to the *Bristol*, on the same station, in the following year. On the 7th of May, 1673, he was promoted to the command of the *Prudent Mary*, Fireship. On the 3d of February, 1674, he was made captain of the *Rainbow*—hired ship of war. There now comes a hiatus of six years, which will be accounted for later.

“On the 20th of July, 1680, Billopp was appointed to the command of the *Depthford Ketch*. Then, says M. Charnock: ‘Whether he retired from service for a time after this period, we know not, but we have not been able to learn anything relative to him until the year 1692, when we find him commanding the *Ossory*, of ninety guns. He was appointed to this ship as successor of Captain John Tyrrel, on the 6th of December, 1692, and was promoted on the 23d of May (1693), following, to the *Victory*, first rate, 100 guns, succeeding Sir Edward Stanley. On the death of Sir John Ashby, in the following month, Captain Billopp was removed to the *London*, 96 guns, at that time the largest ship in the English Navy.’

“Mr. Charnock has done well, but even he is not complete, for Mr. Wm. L. Clowes, in ‘*The Royal Navy*,’ vol. ii, p. 328, informs us that Captain Christopher Billopp commanded the *Greenwich* of 54 guns, and 280 men, at the battle of Bantry Bay, May 1, 1689, which closes the gap by over three years. But the same author tells us what the Captain was doing in the first part of the year 1692, for he states on page 349, of the same volume, that Captain Christopher Billopp was in command of the *Suffolk*, of 70 guns, at the great naval battle of Barfleur, beginning May 19, 1692, and lasting three days. It is not at all probable that even this completes the list of vessels which he commanded, for it is very difficult to secure accurate data of English naval affairs of over two hundred years ago.”

Charles Farmar Billopp states that Capt. Billop died in 1726 in London, aged nearly 90 years, but a copy of his will, which we have received from London, shows that it was probated 24 April, 1725. This will is appended.

WILL OF CAPT. CHRISTOPHER BILLOP

Somerset House, London

Prerogative Court of Canterbury. 80 Romney.

In the name of God Amen the five and twentieth day of April one thousand seven hundred and twenty four I Christopher Billop prisoner in the Fleet prison in the parish of St. Brides in the city of London Gentleman considering the certainty of Death and the incertainty of the time of Death being of sound mind and memory praise be to God for it hereby revoking all other wills by me formerly made do make and ordaine this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following First I commend my soul to God that gave it in humble hopes through his Grace and Mercy in Christ Jesus his son my Redeemer and in the Merits of my blessed saviours passion to obtaine everlasting Salvation for my Soul and as for my Worldly Estate both real and personal I dispose of them as followeth Subject to the Limitations Trust and Conditions hereinafter Specified and declared that is to say as to my Plantation in Bentley and Mannor of Bentley and the Mansion House and all other houses there unto belonging with all the rights Members Hereditaments and Appurtenances Situate in the Province of New York upon Stratton Island I give devise and bequeath the said premisses to my Daughter Mary now wife of the Reverend William Skinner Clerk my Son in Law for and during the terme of her natural life only and from and after her decease I give devise and bequeath the said premisses to the heirs Male of her body begotten or to be begotten and in default of Issue Male of the body of the said Mary by the said William Skinner then after her decease I give devise and bequeath all and singular the before mentioned premise with all and singular the Rights members Hereditaments and appurtenances to Christopher Farmer second son of my son in law Thomas Farmar upon condition that he the said Christopher or which so ever of his Brethren by virtue of the several Limitations herein and hereby by me limited and declared or my heir at Law shall come to inherit the premisses well and truly pay the sune of Two hundred pounds apeice of New York money to each and every of the Daughter and Daughters of the body of the said Mary by the said William Skinner begotten or to be begotten And it is my will that my said Daughter Mary now wife

of the said William Skinner shall leave unto the said Christopher Farmar or to him that shall come to inherit the premisses according to the Limitations by me herein after mentioned and declared all the said Messuages Outhouses Fences and other appurtenances in good and sufficient reparations and shall leave in the said Mansion House of Bentley to the said Christopher five good Feather beds with Sheets Blanketts Pillows Curtains and Val-lens and other furniture thereunto belonging with such Brass pewter and Wooden Ware as are requisite for a Family of six people with Table Linnen and all manner of necessaries for the Kitchen fit and Convenient with five pair of Iron Dogs and five fire shovells and Tongs for the Chambers with a Table in each Room and such Seats as are used in that Country and also proper Utensills for a Dairy of ten Cows and sufficient Casks in the Cellar for Cyder and all other Conveniences for making of Cyder and shall also leave to the said Christopher Farmar four Horses and Six Oxen fit for the plough with Carts ploughs and Harrows and all other Implements of Husbandry thereunto belonging and in that Country Used of Axes Howes and the like with ten Milch Cowes and Calves that same Spring and years falling and rearing and three Steers of three years old four Steers of two years old four Heifers of two years old and ten yearlings and a Bull of two years old Ten hogs of a twelve month old two Sows and a Boar and one hundred Ewes and a Ram Fifty Lambs Ten Weathers of two years old with what fowls shall be at the House upon Condition that he the said Christopher Farmer or which soever of his Brethren or my right heir shall come to inherit the premisses by virtue of the Remainders by me herein and hereby after limited specified and declared shall take upon him and his heirs for ever the Sirname of Billop without the Mixture or addition of any other Sirname whatsoever to have and to hold the said Mannor Mansion House Lands Tenements and hereditaments and premisses with all and singular the Rights Members and appurtenances whatsoever to him the said Christopher Farmer and to the heirs Male of his Body and for want of Heirs Male of the body of the said Christopher Farmar or in Case he should happen to dye without Issue Male of his body and before he attains to the age of one and twenty years then I give devise and bequeath the said premisses and all and singular their

Rights Members hereditaments and appurtenances to Thomas Farmar the third son of my said Son in Law Thomas Farmar and to the heirs Male of his body And in default of Heirs Male of the Body of the said Thomas Farmar then I give devise and bequeath the said Mannor Mansion House of Bentley with all outhouses Messuages Lands Tenements Hereditaments and premisses and their appurtenances with their and every of their rights members and appurtenances unto Brook Farmar the fourth son of my said son in Law Thomas Farmar and to the heirs Male of his body and in default of heirs Male of the Body of the said Brook Farmar Then I give devise and bequeath all the said Mannor and Mansion House of Bentley and all Messuages Lands Tenements Hereditaments and premisses thereunto belonging with all and singular their rights Members and appurtenances unto Robert Farmer the fifth son of my said son in Law Thomas Farmar and to the heirs Male of the body of the said Robert Farmer and in default of such Issue Male of the Body of the said Robert Farmer or the same becoming extinct then I give devise and bequeath the said Mannor and Mansion House of Bentley with all Outhouses thereunto belonging with all Messuages Lands Tenements and hereditaments and premisses with all their right members and appurtenances unto Samuel Farmar the sixth son of my said son in Law Thomas Farmar and the heirs male of the body of the said Samuel Farmar and in default and upon failure of Issue Male of the body of the said Samuel Farmar then I give devise and bequeath all the said Mannor and Mansion House of Bentley with all Outhouses thereunto belonging with all the Messuages Lands Tenements and and hereditaments and premisses with all and singular their rights members and appurtenances whatsoever unto William Farmar the seventh son of my said Son in Law Thomas Farmar and to the Heirs Male of the body of the said William Farmar and in default of Heirs Male of the body of the said William Farmar and upon failure of Issue Male of his body or the same becoming extinct to to my right heirs male for ever that shall be of the Sirname of Billop But in case the said Christopher Farmar Thomas Farmar Brook Farmar Robert Farmar Samuel Farmar and William Farmar the sons of my said Son in Law Thomas Farmar happen to dye without Issue Male of their bodys respectively begotten or dye leaving such Issue

and the same become Extinct and not coming to take and enjoy the said premisses herein and hereby by to them successively and respectively limited and appointed the elder of them and the heirs Male of his body to be for ever preferred before the younger of the heirs male of his body Then in such Case the premisses to be and remaine to my right heirs of the Sirname of Billop for ever and as for my plantation upon or near Rareton River known by the name of Junions Land scituate in the province of New York aforesaid I give devise and bequeath the same and all my Claim Title right and Interest thereunto to my Daughter Anne Farmar wife of the said Thomas Farmar my son in Law for and during the term of her Natural life only together with all Messuages Outhouses Gardens and Orchards thereupon or thereunto in any wise belonging or appertaining with all Mines and Minerals Commodities and appurtenances whatsoever thereunto belonging or appertaining and after her decease it is my Will that the said last mentioned premises and Lands with their appurtenances be equally divided between all the younger children of her body begotten or to be begotten by the said Thomas Farmar my son in law ever excepting Jaspar Farmar elder son of the said Thomas Farmar my son in law to whom I give only Twenty pounds and no more as a Legacy and ever Saving and reserving to that other son of his or heir male of his body or my right heir that happens to enjoy and become Heir of Bentley by the Limitations aforesaid the Tenth part of the profits of the said Mines he ever allowing and being at the tenth part of the Charge of digging and raiseing and working of the said Mines and upon Condition that he shall not in any wise obstruct or hinder the working thereof But in case any and whichsoever of my aforementioned Devisees to Bentley the Mannor thereof and appurtenances shall or will obstruct or in any wise hinder the working of the said Mines then I do hereby revoke and annull all his or their right thereunto And it is my Will and in such Case that the same shall be and remaine to all the younger Children of the said Thomas Farmar my son in law as well Males and Females and the profits of the Mines to be equally divided between them at every six months end and particularly to such of them as shall have the consent of their Parents in their Marriage Settlement and as for the money due

to me from the estate of Sir Alexander Rigby knt. late deceased amounting by this time to five thousand two hundred pounds principall and Interest I give thereout to Mr. James Fittar of London Merchant two hundred pounds And to my Nephew Thomas Billop of Deptford in the County of Kent five hundred pounds to the said William Skinner Clerk my Son in Law the sume of five hundred pounds in full satisfaction of all promises demands or other Engagements I made to him upon his Marriage Settlement and all right he may pretend unto by virtue of his Marriage with my said Daughter Mary unto the Junions Lands and upon no other Condition I also give to him that shall come to have and to enjoy Bentley and the Mannor of Bentley and the rest of the premisses thereunto belonging according to the Devises bequests and Limitations herein and hereby by me before limited and declared the sum of Eight hundred pounds And it is further my Will that after payment of my debts Funerall Expences and Legacies aforesaid that what remains of the money due to me from the said Sir Alexander Rigby's Estate may be equally divided amongst the younger children of the said Thomas Farmar be they Males or Females saving that Mary the eldest Daughter of the said Thomas Farmar shall have double the Share as well of the said Junions Lands as of the money that is to be divided of what the other Children have to their Shares and that the Share of such one or more of them as shall happen to dye before he or they do happen to attain to the age of one and twenty years respectively be equally divided amongst the Survivors of them And I do hereby constitute make and appoint the said James Fittar and my said nephew Thomas Billop Executors of this my last Will and Testament and my said Son in Law William Skinner Trustee to see this my will duely performed in America And after the said remainder of the said money from Sir Alexander Rigby's Estate comes to the hand of the said William Skinner to take care to lay out the same for the best Advantage of the said Thomas Farmar's younger Children Male or Females ever Providing that he that comes to be heir of Bentley or to have a right thereunto by the Limitations aforesaid shall have a right only to the benefit of the tenth part of the Mines that are or may be found and worked upon the said Junions Lands upon Condition of his not disturbing them in the working thereof as afore-

said and not at all to the Lands of the said Junions which I order to be divided as aforesaid amongst all the younger children Males and Females of the said Thomas Farmar my son in law after the decease of my Daughter Anne their Mother and further it is my will that the Negroes should go and be to the use of such as by this my will shall come to inherit my said premisses of Bentley I give to my Neice Hannah Booth Fifty Pounds. Chris. Billop. This will was published signed sealed delivered and declared by the Testator Christopher Billop to be his last Will and Testament and by us whose names are hereunto subscribed as witnesses attested in his sight and presence and by his express directions he looking upon us at our subscribing our names hereunto. Tho. Frank. Wm. Abell. Wm. Abbott. John Baker. Edward Games.

Memorandum Whereas there was but twenty pounds at first given by the Testator Christopher Billop to Hannah Booth he did this Sixteenth day of May 1724 call for his will and ordered the sume of twenty pounds to be made Fifty pounds which said word Fifty is interlined in the last line of this will and then again published and declared by the said Testator Christopher Billop to be his last Will and Testament and by us whose names are hereunto subscribed as Witnesses attested in his sight and presence and by his Express directions he looking upon us at our subscribing our names hereunto Signum Chris. Billop. Tho. Frank. Wm. Abell. Wm. Abbott. Edw. Games.

Probatum fuit cujusmodi Testamentum apud London (cum Condicio annexo) coram venerabili viro Edvardo Kinaston Legum Doctore Surrogato venerabilis et Egregii viri Johannes Bettesworth Legum Doctoris Curie Prerogative Cantuariensis Magistri Custodis sive Commissarii legitime constituti vicesimo quarto die Mensis Aprilis Anno Domini Millesimo Septingentesimo vicesimo quinto Juramentis Jacobi Fitter alias Fittar et Thome Billop Executorum in dicto Testamento nominat' Quibus comissa fuit administratio omnium et singulorum bonorum jurium et creditor' dicti defuncti de bene et fideliter administrando eadem ad Sancta Dei Evangelia jurat.

CHAPTER III

JOSEPH BILLOPP

Captain Billop's brother Joseph, wholesale grocer in Gracier Street, London, to whom he mortgaged the house in Beverly, England, in 1677, was on Staten Island, and lived at Bentley Manor in 1698. In the *New Jersey Archives, Series 1*, vol. 24, p. 321, under date of Aug. 30, 1698, there is a record of a power of attorney given by Christopher Billopp of London gent, to Joseph Billopp of the same place, merchant, to recover debts due by John Inians and other debts in New York. (*East Jersey Deeds*, G: 238.)

On November 30, 1699, the Proprietors of East New Jersey sold to Joseph Billopp a lot on High Street, Perth Amboy. They reserved to themselves the right to run a street through the lot unless Billopp within the year following built a house on the land. This deed is to be found in *East Jersey Deeds*, G: 23.

The Proprietors of the Province of East New Jersey to all persons to whom these presents shall come send Greeting Know yee that the said Proprietors as well for and in Consideration of the Rents Conditions and provisoe herein after mentioned as for divers other Causes & Considerations them at present Especially moving Have Granted Bargained and Sold and by these presents do Grant Bargain and Sell unto Joseph Billop Merchant All that Tract of Land Scituate Lying & being In the Town of Perth Amboy in the County of Middlesex in the said Province Containing one Acre in Length ten chains & in bredth on Chaine bounded East by Hight Street, West by Back Street, South by Benjamin Griffith's Lott and North by John Ireland's Lott, together with all the Rights Priviledges and Appurtenances whatsoever to the same belonging or in any manner of ways appertaining The Proprietors always reserving to themselves their heirs and Assignes full power and absolute Authority at any time when they shall see meet & Convenient to run a street Cross through the Middle of y^e said Lott To have & to hold the said Town Lott of Land & premisses with their

and every of their Appurtenances unto him the said Joseph Billop his heirs and assigns for Ever to the only proper use Benefit & behoof of him the said Joseph Billop his heirs and Assignes for Ever, Yeilding and paying for the said Town Lott of Land and premises unto the Said Proprietors their heirs and Assignes three Shillings Sterling Money of England or the value thereof on every five and twentieth day of March yearly and every year for ever hereafter in Lieu & stead of all other services & demands whatsoever Provided always & these presents are upon this Condition that if the said Joseph Billop his heirs or assigns do not within the time & space of Twelve Months Next Ensuing the date hereof Errect & Build or Cause to be Errected and Built upon the said Town Lott of Land One Mansion or Dwelling house & that of no Less dimensions then thirty foot in Length Sixteen foot wide & Twelve Foot Studd then this deed of sale & every Article Clause & thing therein Contained to be void Null & of non Effect any thing herein Contained to the Contrary in any wise Notwithstanding In Witness whereof wee have Caused the Seal of the Said Province to be hereunto Affixed & the same to be Signed by our Governour & the Major part of his Councill for the time being this thirtieth day of November in the Eleventh year of the Raigne of our Sovereigne Lord William the third King of England Scotland France and Ireland Defender of the Faith æc Annoq Dom 1699.

Pro

Jere Basse Andrew Bowne, Richard Hartshorne, John

Seal

Bishop, Sam^l. Dennes, John Royle

Joseph Billopp and Abraham Lakeman also received a patent in 1702 at Stony Brook, Staten Island, near the present Oakwood. This was granted June 30, 1702. *Cal. Council Minutes*, p. 172; see also *Land Papers*, 3:70. (See *Map 6 of Colonial Grants of Staten Island*, by Geo. M. Root; also map accompanying *The Town of Dover upon Staten Island*, by G. W. Tuttle. *Proc. S. I. Inst. Arts and Sci.*, vol. 1, p. 37.)

On page 132, *N. J. Archives, 1st Series*, vol. IV, is the statement in the undated letter of complaint about residents of New York holding office in New Jersey, that: "Oour Escheator Generall Mr Joseph Billop, has likewise no manner of Estate

here. . . . ” The writer may not have known about the lot in Perth Amboy.

Joseph Billopp became an important man on Staten Island, as we may judge from the following miscellaneous items.

In the *Collections, N. Y. Hist. Society*, 1885, p. 72, is the statement that Joseph Billopp became a Freeman of the City in the Mayoralty of Johannes De Peyster Esq^r.; “1698–9, January 5, Joseph Billopp, Merchant.”

With the preaching of the Rev. George Keith on Staten Island in 1702, a definite start was made to establish the Church of England (See *The Church of St. Andrew*, Davis, Leng & Vosburgh, p. 18), and we find in *Stillwell's Hist. & Genealogical Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 50, that Billopp was one of the vestry chosen by the freeholders on April 1st, 1703. He, however, did not become one of the twelve undertakers who commenced the erection of the Church of St. Andrew in 1709, but the names of Duxbury, Garrison, Britain and Tillyer are on both lists.

Richmond ss

Whereas it is an order of Cortt that the free holders Should have notis to mete upon the first Day of aprell 1703 for the making Choyse of a Vestery where upon it was accordingly Don the free holders mete togather and made Choyse of and maid Choise of

Mr. Elios Duxbury
 Mr. Joseph Billopp
 Mr. Daniel Lake
 Mr. Thomas Stillwell
 Mr. John Stillwell
 Mr. Ephoram Tayler
 Lambard [Lambert] Garrison
 nathanil briting [Britain]
 nicholos maning
 William Tillyer

Joseph Billopp as we have seen was referred to as “Merchant,” and he was probably a man of wealth. In the *Collections, N. Y. Historical Society*, 1892, p. 369, Abstract of Wills, Liber 7, p. 107, is the record: “Edward, Viscount Cornbury, Captain General, etc. Whereas Ferdinando Wamsley of Richmond Co.

lately died intestate, Letters of administration are granted to Joseph Billop, as principal creditor, May 7, 1703."

On page 303 (1703) *Calendar of Hist. Manuscripts*. Governor Cornbury. "Petition. Jacob Isaac, for remission of duty on goods imported. Test. Signed by J. Billopp, Daniel Lake, Tho. Stillwell, Lambert Garrison, William Tillyer, Nathaniel Britton, Ephrem Taylor, F. Antonisen van Pelt and Cornelius Nefes. Oath of allegiance signed by Ellis Duxbury and the same parties."

In the power of attorney given by Captain Billop to his daughters Mary and Anne, on April 3, 1702, which we cite on a following page, one of the things they were to do, was to "bring to a reckoning and to adjust Accts with the said Joseph Billop," and others whom it may concern.

In Richmond County *Deeds, B*, p. 437, under date of 1702-3 "Joseph Billopp and abraham Lakman two of her majesties Justices of the peace" are mentioned. Lakman apparently could not write his name; he makes "his mark." He appears to have written his name on other occasions.

On page 576, Richmond County *Deeds, Liber B*, there is recorded for Joseph Billopp a deed made 25th day of April 1704, covering "in all about Two Hundred and Twenty acres or Thereabouts" of land which he purchased from Right Hon^{ble}: Thomas Earle of Lymrick ("Collon^{el}: Thomas Dongon"). "Begining at a Black Oake by the burying place Ags^t: Abrah: Lackmans House. . . ."

In the *Census of Staten Island*, supposed to have been made in 1706, Joseph Billopp's name appears next to that of "Thomas Pharmer," and he gives his age as 63.

January The 28th 170 $\frac{6}{7}$

Att a meeting of the Justices hereunder named and haveing under there Consideration of building a towne house and preson according to Act of Assembly it is hereby ordered that the said Towne house and preson According to the Said Act be built at the head of the fresh Kill upon the Land of M^r Rezoe and Lues Deboys provided mr Rezoe and Lues Deboys do performe a promise they made by them of Giveing and Convaying the

Ground promised by them before three of vs for the vse of a
Town house and Preson for the vse of the County foreuer

Ellus Duxbury

Joseph Billopp

John Stillwell

his

Abraham A Lakeman

mark

—*Stillwell's Miscellany*, vol. 1, p. 42.

J. Billopp, Anthony Tyce and Tyce Williamson witnessed the will of Peter Manett January 19, 1707.—*Collections, N. Y. Hist. Soc.*, 1893, p. 121.

J. Billopp, Jacque Poillon and Capt. Nicholas Manning, were commissioners “appointed by act of assembly for the laying out of roads in the County of Richmond.” They laid out a number of roads during 1705, and the following years to 1709. (See *Stillwell's Miscellany*, vol. 1, pp. 52–55.)

Of course some of these old roads, such as the King's Highway or Richmond Road, were in existence long before they were officially laid out by these commissioners. In this connection the *Proc. S. I. Inst. Arts and Sciences*, 3:26 should be consulted.

These following Instruments was Recorded for the Comissioners of ye High Wayes October the 27th 1708

Begining at ye fferry by the watering place from thence along as the Road hath been Some years used, to Stony brook and over the sd brook, between Hanss Lowrences ffence and the swamp and so along between Stuarts ffence and sd Swamp to the Corner of sd Stuarts ffence, then runing to the left hand and So along through y^e woods by a Range of marked Trees in as direct a Line as Swamps and Hills will or Could admitt to a Brook near the House, where Benjamin Brittin lately dwelt, now in the posession of Mark Dissasway wh[ence] over ye sd brook then Inclining to the Right hand and so by the west Side of the Said Little House and so along through Billopps Land, by a Range of Marked Trees, To Cap^{tn} Billopps against Amboey this Road to be ffour Rood broad, English Measure

J. Billopp

Jacque poillon

Nic^h Manning

[on side of page, the following]

This is the maine or High Road from the watering place to Billopps agst Amboey

a Road from the Head of the ffresh Kill To Cap^{tn} Christopher Billopps [in margin]

ffrom the head of the ffresh Kill, between Rosoes ffence and James Hansis ffence, and So along between the ffence, as they now stand provided there is three Rodd between them, & So along by Engle burtts and over Coartlandts Brook, & so along between the ffences as the old Road, hath formerly and now doth go, and by the pound being now att ye Corner, of Jno. Vanhoes Land, and So along the Road, which is now made up of to the Corn^r of the Land Lattley belonging to John Lacount, and then turning one the Left hand and so along as the path goes to Billopps Creek and over the Said Creek, along the paith by Buttlers House which brings you into the Maine Road which goes to Cap^{tn} Billopps, fferry This Road to be all the way 3 Rodd, Broad English measure

This Two Roads was Recorded for the Comissioners, May ye 5th 1709

J. Billopp
Jacque poilln
Nic^h Manning

This 24th September [& Capt Nicholas Manning—interpolated in margin, but the names of the two other commissioners signing are omitted]

[Road Laid out from Cap^t Christo Billopp to Stoney brook and So from thence to ye fferry—in margin]

Laid out a Road from Cap^t Christopher Billopps through his neck to the Beach and along the beach to a post Set up at the S: E: Corner of the Land now in possession of Samuel Osbourne then turning up the bank and So along by the Said osbournes ffense into the woods and So by a Line of trees marked with a X to a Clear ffeild in the possession of Cap^t Pollion & then through the Said feild into the woods and then along again by a Line of trees marked as above To Stony Brook & from thence to the fferry as formerly Recorded the Said Road to be foure Rodd in

breadth English measure The Roads as above Recorded was Laid out, by us

J. Billopp
Jacque poillon
Nich Manning

In the *Calendar of Hist. Manuscripts*, p. 418 (1710) we read: "Commission. John Johnson, Joseph Billop, and William Bradford, printer, to be commissioners to execute the office of treasurer of the province of Nova Cessaria or New Jersey, lately filled by Miles Foster, deceased." Also in the *Calendar*, p. 378 (1711), Feby. 15, we find: "Bentley. Letter, Joseph Billopp, recommending certain persons to be justices of Richmond county."

Clute in his *Annals of Staten Island*, p. 455, states: "We find the name of Joseph Billop in the county records, once as being the lessee of 200 acres of land, and in 1711 as a Judge of the county." The *New York Civil List* states that he was appointed or elected March 5, 1711. He was Justice of the Peace in 1702-3 (*Liber B of Deeds*, p. 437) as already mentioned.

In *Richmond County Deeds B*, p. 584,¹ the deed of William Tillyer and his wife Mary dated 6th of August, 1711, to "The said Caleb HethCoat Joseph Billopp Nath^l. Britton Lamb^t. Garrison and Alex^r. Stuart, To theim their heirs and assigns for Ever In behalfe of all the freeholders and Inhabitants of the above Said County for Building of one English Church and Church yard or Burying place upon the Said Land, for the publick benefitt as well of the Inhabitants of the said Island, as also those above named Gentlemen. . . ." Thus we find Joseph Billopp connected with the Church of St. Andrew, or its beginnings, from 1703 to the time of his death.

Liber 8, p. 105, *Collections, N. Y. Historical Society*, 1893, p. 87. Whereas Joseph Billop of Staten Island died intestate, Letters of administration are granted to Thomas Forner, Esq., [Farmer], who hath intermarried with Anne the daughter of Christopher Billop, brother of said Joseph Billop, April 21, 1712.

¹ See *Anthon's Notes*, Pro. S. I. Inst. Arts and Sciences, Vol. 3, 1925.

CHAPTER IV

MARY BILLOP, ANNE BILLOP FARMAR AND JUDGE FARMAR

In 1702 Captain Billop and his daughters Mary and Anne were in London, and he then put them in charge of his properties in America, as appears from the following taken from the copied liber 25 of *Conveyances, New York County*, pp. 66-68.

Recorded for Mrs. [Miss] Mary Billop and Mrs [Miss] Anne
Billop the 22^d. day of August Anno 1702

Know all men by these presents that I Christopher Billop of London Gent have made and ordained and by these presents doo make ordaine constitute authorize and impower my loving daughters Mary Billop and Anne Billop of London Spinsters joyntly and either of them severally my true certaine and lawfull attorneys for me and in my name and to and for my proper use if they shall see occasion and think fitt by all lawfull ways and means whatsoever to demand sue for recover enter into and take possession of all that my Plantation scituate lying and being in Staten Island called Bentley in the Province of New Yorke in parts beyond the seas with all the houses buildings lands servants utensils and other the appurtenances goods and things whatever belonging thereunto and of all or any other lands houses or plantations in the said Province or in East Jersey called Jonians [John Inians] Plantation or elsewhere in America of and belonging to me the said Christopher Billop likewise for me and in my name and to and for my proper use and behoofe to demand levy sue for recover and receive by all lawfull ways and means whatsoever as well of and from Joseph Billop Merchant my brother now att New Yorke aforesaid as also of and from all and every other person and persons whatsoever whom itt doth or shall concern in New Yorke or East Jersey aforesaid or elsewhere in America all such debts sum or sums of money goods effects and things whatsoever as well for and concerning all or any my said Plantations lands and houses as upon or by virtue of any Bond bill booke or upon account of trading or dealing

and upon any other account or by any other waies or means whatsoever in any manner of wise alsoe to call to account and force and bring to a reckoning and to adjust Accts with the said Joseph Billop and all others whome itt doth or may concern for and concerning the premisses and upon receipt or recovery of all or any of the said premisses sufficient acquittances and discharges for me and in my name to make and give

Giving and by these presents granting unto my said Attorneys joyntly and either of them severally full power and authority in and touching the premisses to sue pursue arrest attach seize sequester implead imprison condemme and prosecute and thence and thereof again to acquitt discharge and out of prison to release also for me to appear and my person to represent in all or any Court or Courts as demandant or defendent in any suite Action or appeale for or by reason of ye premisses also attorney or attorneys under them or either of them to sett substitute and revoke and generally to doo act and performe all other matters and things in and to the premisses requisite and nessessary as fully as I my selfe might or could doo were I personally present And I doo hereby ratifie and confirme all and whatsoever my said Attorneys joyntly or either of them severally their or either of their substitutes shall legally doo or procure to be done in and touching the premisses *In Wittness* whereof I the said Christopher Billop have hereunto sett my hand and seale the third day of April now instant Anno Dom 1702 and in the thirteenth year of the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord William the third by the Grace of God King of England &c

Chris Billop (seale)

Sealed and delivered (this sheet being first duely Stampd) in the presence of the word called being first interlined between the ninth and tenth lines

Leigh Atwood

C. Wolley.

Memorandum that on the twenty second day of August Anno Dom 1702 personally came before me Thomas Noell Esq^r. Mayor of the Citty of New Yorke Leigh Atwood Gent and Charles Wolley Merchant Wittnesses to the within written letter of Attorney who being sworne upon the holy Evangelists of Almighty

God did then depose and testifie that they saw the within named Christopher Billop seale and deliver the same as his voluntary Act and deed. Tho Noell Mayor.

According to William H. Benedict's *New Brunswick in History*, p. 251, "Capt Billop had an early interest in the city, as he held a mortgage on John Inian's [mentioned in the power of attorney] two lots of 640 acres each; and on these lots the city to the north of Livingston Ave. is now built. Thomas Farmar and several of his children made their homes there."

Mary Billop first married the Reverend Mr. Brooke, an Englishman, who arrived in 1705, and was advised by Lord Cornbury to settle in Elizabeth Town and Perth Amboy. His ministry came to an end in 1707, when he and the "Rev. Thoroughgood¹ Moore were lost at sea. They were on their way to London to make complaint against the corrupt practices of Lord Cornbury.

She next married the Rev. William Skinner, rector of St. Peters Church, Perth Amboy, from 1722 to 1758. They had no children. Mary is supposed to have died in 1725.

Anne, Billop's second daughter, married Col. Thomas Farmar in 1705, and resided in the Manor house on Staten Island, where their eldest son Jasper was born in 1707.

Charles Farmar Billopp records that "Thomas and Anne (Billop) Farmar had nine sons consecutively, followed by three daughters. They were born in the following order: Jasper, Christopher, Thomas, Brooke, Edward, Robert, Samuel, William Penn, John, Mary, Anne Billopp, and Elizabeth." The same authority further states that the family tree or chart in his possession records that: "Thomas Farmar, High Sheriff of Philadelphia and Mayor of New Brunswick, married Anne, the daughter and heiress of Captain Christopher Billopp, Royal Navy."

Previous to his marriage Thomas Farmar was appointed by William Penn in 1701 Sheriff of Philadelphia, which office he held until the latter part of 1704, when it is stated in the minutes of the *Pennsylvania Provincial Council*, Vol. ii, page 25, that "Thomas Farmar High Sheriff of the City and County of Philadelphia acquainted y^e Board that having a design to transport himself to England he must crave leave to lay down his said

¹ Whitehead spells this name *Thorowgood*.

office, and therefore requested the Board that another might be appointed."

Charles Farmar Billopp is of the opinion that Farmar went to England at this time to sue for the hand of Anne Billopp.

There was much opposition by some of the people of New Jersey to Col. Farmar residing on Staten Island, while holding the office of Collector of the Port of Amboy, though he at least during part of the time had a deputy there.

He later removed to New Jersey, though he also appears to have had business quite frequently in New York City.

After 1702 one Governor served in common for the provinces of New York and New Jersey up to the time of Governor Lewis Morris, and a Governor frequently appointed to office a gentleman from one colony to serve in the other.

"Colonel Farmer, though living on Staten Island in the province of New York, was a member of the New Jersey Assembly in 1708, according to the *New Jersey Archives, 1st series*, Vol. xiii, page 308. The first mention of him in that august body was on the third of March, 1708, and according to Vol. xxv, page 304, his last appearance there was a generation later, November 23, 1743."²

MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY OF NEW JERSEY FROM THE 5TH TO 12TH OF MAY 1708³

On the afternoon of May 11th 1708 "Capt Farmer Reported from the said Com'ittee that they had made some Progress in the matter to them Referr'd; and that he was directed to move that they might have leave to Sitt again at tenn a Clock to morrow morning." On the morning of May 12 "Capt Farmer Reported from said Comittee that they had considered His Lords^{ps} Speech in all its parts, and had drawn up an Answer to the same, which they directed him to Report to the House."

The answer to Governor Lord Cornbury's speech was passed as read. (Pages 295-298.)

At this time Thomas Farmar, as has been stated, was residing at the Manor of Bentley on Staten Island, and we find him one of the "Undertakers" who commenced building the Church of

² *History, Thomas and Anne Billopp Farmar*, p. 34.

³ *New Jersey Archives, First Series*, Vol. 3, pp. 294, 295.

St. Andrew at Richmond in 1709. "Thomas ffarmer" is mentioned as one of the first two church wardens of St Andrew in the Queen Anne Charter of 1713 (see *Church of St Andrew*, pp. 60, 63).

While it is evident that Thomas Farmar was highly respected, there is also much evidence that there was considerable opposition to his holding office by reason of his residence on Staten Island, as has been stated, and as the following citations will more fully show.

GOVERNOR HUNTER TO THE LORDS OF TRADE

To the R^t Hon^{ble} the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations.

My Lords

Imediatly upon prorogueing the Assembly of this place I went to attend that of the Jerseys where I met with difficulties of a new nature, there I had a Council to struggle with which had well nigh rendered all my endeavours for her Majesty's service there as fruitless as the humours of the Assembly have done here.

The Act for regulating Elections and ascertaining the Qualifications of the Representatives of this Province, Page 15. This Act thô founded upon and conformable to an Instruction of Her Majesty for this Purpose was Rejected, because repugnant to an Act past in Coll. Ingoldsby's time, which act as they themselves owne was made on purpose to exclude Doctor Johnston and Captain Farmer from being Elected; These Gentlemen at that time living by chance in the Province of New York, thô their Estates, which are very valuable, lye in the Jerseys, and who have acted very zealously, and strenuously for her Majesty's service. [p. 201.]

The Acts past by me that session are as followeth. [p. 205.]

I am commanded by Your Lordships in Your last to me to send you my observations on the Acts past in Jersey, during Coll Ingoldsby's Administration.

The fourth is an Act for the better qualifying Representatives.

This was levelled particularly against Captaine ffarmer and Doctor Johnston men of the best Estates and ability in this Province, and who have been very active and useful in Her Majesty's Affaires, and may deprive us of more such, and is contrary to that Constitution of Assembly appointed by Her Majesty upon the surrender & confirmed by all her subsequent Instructions, obliging the elected to an actual residence, whereas the Instruction mentions noe other qualification but an Estate to a certaine value within the Division.

.

Your Lordships most humble

New York

& most obed^t serv^t

7th May 1711

Rob^t Hunter

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. v, pp. 201–207.

GOVERNOR HUNTER TO THE COMMISSIONERS OF CUSTOMS

Gentlemen

.

An other thing I shall take notice of to you is Mr. Birchfeilds⁴ suspending Mr. Farmer from his Collectors office at Amboy in New Jersey the sole reason seems to be his non-residing and the delay vessells were put to by that means: this is in some measure true but Captⁿ Farmer did not live for some time at Amboy. But [it] is likewise true that at the time of his suspension and and for some months before, he lived there with his family and if its allowable to a Collector to live out of his Port M^r Farmer had the best reason to expect it of any man for his House on Staten Island in the Province of New York is directly opposite to Amboy, from which Port no vessell can goe or come into without his seeing it, but to take away all occassion of complaint he appointed a deputy at Amboy who duly attended there, but you will perceive by the Affidavits and representation to M^r Birchfeild where the complaint is of his not attending, that little or no notice is taken of an enquiry being made after his deputy.

The truth of the matter I take to be thus: M^r Birchfeild having (as I am credibly informed) promised this office to M^r Swift even

⁴ Mr. Birchfield the Surveyor General of Customs.

before he had seen M^r Farmer or been at Amboy, was resolved to make room for him on any pretence, or he would never have displaced M^r Farmer, for not living in Amboy and put in M^r Swift a Tavern keeper in New York, where he lives with his family and indeed very seldom leaves it to attend his duty at Amboy which is near forty miles from his habitation.

Had M^r Swift been in Commission and been suspended to make room for M^r Farmer t'would have been much less surprizing the latter being a gentleman of honesty and very good capacity for that imploy. The former a Tavern keeper of no good reputation but on the contrary blackened with the imputation and violent presumption of crimes not fit to be mentioned.

I am very unwilling to give you the trouble of a Recommendation but the good service Mr. Farmer has done Her Majesty in the Assembly of Jersey being a principal instrument in settling a support for the Government and promot^g her interest in what ever else came before their house, deserves some notice.

.

Gentlemen &c

New York May 7. 1711

Ro: Hunter.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, vol. 5, p. 231.

In *New Jersey Archives, First Series*, vol. iv, p. 118, there is an extract of a letter from an unnamed Member of the Council [1711] complaining that many of the important offices are held by persons residing in the Province of New York. “Wee are now in a much worse Condition than if Im’ediately under the Governmen^t of N. York., for most of Our Officers live in and belong to that Province Yet wee must pay them.” [p. 132] [Joseph] “Billop has a Comission to be Escheator Generall; Captain Farmer is made a Collonel & Judge of the Pleas in Middlesex and Somersett. . . .” On page 135 of the same book there is a “Letter from Colonel Thomas Farmar to Governor Hunter—about supplies for the Troops,” dated “Amboy July 31st 1711”; and on p. 137 a “Letter to Colonel Farmar, at Perth Amboy, about the Movement of His Troops,” dated at “New York August 3^d. 1711.” His “Excellency” desired to see the troops on their way to Albany.

Charles Farmar Billopp states that “The salary for the office of judge for fourteen months was the munificent sum of fifty

pounds, and the salary for managing the Canada expedition was twenty-seven pounds." He continues: "His work must have been very satisfactory, for his promotions and honors followed swiftly, as we find in the same volume, page 139" a "Letter from Governor Hunter to Jeremiah Basse, Secretary, &c about Commissions for the Supreme Court Judges."

Sr.

New York Oct^r 22 1711

I Returne you y^e paper sealed wth proclamation which I desire you^r Cause to be published forthwith to make out and send me to be Sealed by y^e Returne of this Post two Com'issions for Judge of y^e Supream Court one in y^e name of Thomas Ffarmar Esq^r. and y^e other of John Reading Esq^r and also a Ded: protestatem Directed to David Jamison Esq^r. to Swear them, the time of sitting for y^e next Supream Court is drawing on apace, Soe that you will perceive that there is a necessity of yo^r Dispatching those things that I may have them on Saturday next I am

Yo^r humble Servt.

To Jeremiah Bass, Esq^r.

Ro: Hunter.

The *N. Y. Civil List* records Thomas Farmar appointed or elected a county Judge for Richmond on January 7, 1712.

In the *Calendar of Hist. Manuscripts*, p. 418 (1713), we find: "Petition. Samuel Dennis, Edward Dunham, Moses Rolph, John Griffith, Nath. Fitzrandolph, Wm. Ilsley, Hugh Dunn, Charles Gillman, David Dunham, Nicholas Munday, John Moore and others (whose names are subscribed), inhabitants of the county of Middlesex to the house of representatives of New Jersey, complaining of the fraudulent election of Thomas Farmar and Adam Hude."

It has been stated by Whitehead and Charles Farmar Billopp that Judge Farmar removed from Staten Island to New Jersey about 1711, where his son Thomas Farmar, Jr., who later became Thomas Billopp, is said to have been born. However, he was described as of "Bently in the County of Richmond" in 1712 and again in 1715 in the following deeds. The deed of 1712 has been copied from the *Alexander Papers*, box labeled "Middlesex Co., N. J.," collection of the *New York Historical Society*. It is also recorded at Perth Amboy, N. J., in the records of the Proprietors of East New Jersey.

This Indenture made the Eleventh day of November in y^e Eleventh Year of the Reign of Anne over Great Britaine France, and Ireland Queen &c^a: Annq Dom: 1712 *Between* John Johnston of the City of New York Esq^r: George Willocks and John Harrison both of the Province of New Jersey Gentlemen of the one part and Thomas Farmar of Bently in the County of Richmond and Province of New-York Esq^r. of the other parte *Witnesseth* that the Sd John Johnston George Willocks and John Harrison for and in consideration of a Competent Sume of Good & Lawfull money to them in hand payed by the Said Thomas Farmar the Receit whereof is hereby acknowledged and themselves to be therewith fully Satisfied and contented *Have* Granted Bargained Sold Released and Confirmed and by these presents do Grant Bargaine Sell Release and Confirme unto the Said Thomas Farmar his Heires and assignes These Equall and undevided Fifth partes the Same in Five Equall parts to be Devided of all that Lott of Land Scituate Lying and being in Perth Amboy in the Sd Province of New Jersey being Bounded East by water-Street North by the Market Street west by the Market-Place and South by the Lott of Late Benjamin Clarks Together with all and Singular the Hereeditaments Emoloments advantages and apurtenances unto the three Equall undevided Fifth parts of the Sd Lott of Land y^e Same in Five Equall parts to be devided belonging or any maner of wayes appurtaining and all the Estate Right Title Interest Reservacion Remaindor claime and Demand of them the Sd John Johnston George Willocks and John Harrison them and their and every of their Heires of in to or out of the Sd Bargained Premisses or any part and Parcell thereof *TO have and to hold* all and Singular three full Equall & undevided Fifth parts of the Sd Lott of Land the Same in Five Equall parts to be devided To him the Sd Thomas Farmar his Heires and assignes To the Sole and only Proper use benifite and behoof of him the Sd Thomas Farmar his Heires and assignes for ever *In Witness Whereof* the Sd Parties of these Present Indentures have Interchangably Sett their Hands and Seales the day and Year above written.

John Harrison Geo: Willocks John Johnston

The second deed mentioning Thomas Farmar as of the County of Richmond, is dated 30 June, 1715. It is recorded in Trenton,

N. J. (A2, 131), and also in Perth Amboy, in the records of the Proprietors of East New Jersey, in book 7 (Liber K marked also L, 132).

John Hamilton
to
Thomas Farmar

This Indenture made the thirtieth day of June in the first Year of the Reign of George over Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King &c Annoq Dom: 1715. Between John Hamilton of the City & Province of New York Esq^r of the one part, and Thomas Farmar of Bently in the County of Richmond in the s^d Province of New York Esq^r of the other part, Witnesseth that the said John Hamilton for & in Consideration of the sum of Five Pounds Current Money of the said Province to him in hand paid the Receipt whereof he doth hereby Acknowledge and himself to be therewith fully satisfied & Contented & for himself his Executors & Administrat^r doth Acquit Release & discharge the said Thomas Farmar his Executor & Adminis^{rs} for Ever by these presents hath Granted bargained sold Released Enffeofoed confirmed and by these present doth Grant bargain sell Release Enffeofoed & confirm unto the said Thomas Farmar his heirs and Assignes for Ever all that Equal & Undivided-fifth part the same in five Equal parts to be divided of all that Lott of Land scituate Lying and being in the Town of Perth Amboy the whole Lott Containing Nine tenth parts of an acre being in Length Nine Chaines & in bredth one Chain Bounded Easterly by Water Street, Southerly by a Lott formerly Belonging to Benjamin Clerk deceased, westerly by the Market place & Northerly by the Market Street Together with all and singular the Priviledges Easements Profits Hereditaments Emoluments Advantages & Imunities whatsoever unto the Equal & Undivided fifth part of the said Lot of Land Belonging or in any manner of ways appertainning, And all the Estate Right Title Interest, Reversion, Remainder Claim & demand of him the said John Hamilton of into or out of the above Granted & Bargained premisses or any part or parcell thereof *To have and to hold* the said full Equal & Undivided Fifth part of the Said full Equal & Undivided Nine tenths parts which said Lott of Land Contains within the Limitt & boundaries afore-

said with the Appurtenances unto the said Fifth part of the said Lott of Land belonging unto the said Thomas Farmar his heires and assignes to the Sole & only proper Use Benefit & behoof of him the said Thomas Farmer his heirs and assignes for Ever
In Witness whereof the Said parties to these present Indentures have Interchangeably set their hands & seales the day and year above written

John Hamilton (s)

Sealed and Delivered in the presence of George Willocks John Barclay.

Memorandum that on the 16th of August in the second year of His Majesties Reign Ann Dom 1715 The within Written John Hamilton Appeared before me Thomas Gordon one of his Majesties Councill for the Province of New Jersey, & Acknowledged this Instrument to be his Voluntary Act & Deed to the Use within mentioned Capt et Cog: Anno et Die Supr Dict
 Coram me. Thomas Gordon

In the *Collections, New York Historical Society*, 1893, p. 212, there is the following record in the Abstract of Wills, Liber 9, p. 150.

Will of Anthony Sweem of the County of Richmond, Dated June 16, 1717:

“I appoint Colonel Thomas Farmer, and Dr. Johnson, of New York, and Goesen Adrianse, of Richmond County, executors.”
 Proved March 10 17 $\frac{19}{20}$

The *N. Y. Civil List* records Thomas Farmar, Sheriff of N. Y., July 23, 1717.

In 1716 Farmar was a member of the New Jersey Council, also from 1736 to 1738, and in 1744, in which last year he took an active part in the passage of a militia bill, a pet measure of Governor Lewis Morris and the home government.

In 1734 Governor Cosby recommended that Colonel Thomas Farmar be appointed to the Council. In a letter dated “Whitehall, Sept^r. y^e 5 1735” the Lords of Trade writing to Governor Cosby state that they have recommended Thos. Farmer for the “Council of New Jersey.”

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, Vol. 6, p. 36.

GOVERNOR COSBY TO THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

“ . . . afterwards Gov^r Burnett displaced M^r Jamison & appointed M^r Trent; upon M^r Trent's death he appointed Mr. Hooper, and sometime after displaced M^r Hooper and appointed M^r Farmer.” . . .

Wm Cosby

Dated at Burlington, May 3^d 1733.

—*Documents, Colonial History, N. Y.*, Vol. 5, p. 949.

“Robert Lettice Hooper was originally appointed Chief Justice of New Jersey in 1725, on the death of Mr. Trent. *Supra* V, 795. After having filled that office for about three years, he was succeeded by Thomas Farmer, who officiated as Chief Justice until Nov., 1729, when Mr. Hooper was again appointed to his former position, *Field's Prov. Courts in New Jersey*, 126, 128, and continued to act as Chief Justice until his death which occurred in March 1739, when he was succeeded by Robert Hunter Morris. *Papers of Lewis Morris*, 38—Ed.”—*Documents, Col. Hist. N. Y.*, Vol. 6, p. 24.

On the same page there is reference in a letter of Dec. 7, 1734, where Gov. Cosby recommends that Coll. Thomas Farmer succeed John Johnson deceased.

In his *Early History of Perth Amboy*, 1856, Whitehead states on p. 92: “At the west end of Smith street, in a house now occupied by Mr. Andrews, resided, previously to the revolution, the Farmar family; the children of Thomas Farmar, who removed to Amboy from Bentley, Richmond County, Staten Island, about 1711.⁵ . . . Soon after his arrival in the province, Mr Farmar was appointed, October, 1711, Second Judge of the Provincial Supreme Court, and from March, 1728, to November, 1729, was the presiding Judge of that Court; being succeeded by Robert Lettice Hooper, who had also preceded him in the office.

“He represented Middlesex County, in the Assembly, from 1740 to 1743, during Governor Morris's administration, being one of that functionary's supporters in that body. At one time he kept a country store in Amboy, and for some time before his death was insane.”

⁵ We have shown that he was described as of Manor of Bentley as late as 1715.

From the foregoing references it will be seen that Thomas Farmar was a very much respected man and held the confidence of several governors.

It appears that one son of Thomas Farmar and all three daughters married and settled in New Brunswick. All his large family had married and left the old home at Amboy, so he went with his daughters to New Brunswick, and there his life-long habit of office-holding still clung to him, for the family chart, ignoring the "Captain," the "Colonel," the "Collector of the Port of Amboy," the "Member of His Majesty's Council," the "Judge," and the "Chief Justice," simply tells us he was "High Sheriff of Philadelphia, and Mayor of New Brunswick."⁶ In the Census of 1706, "Thomas Pharmer" gave his age as 33. He was born in 1673 or 1674, and according to Charles Farmar Billopp died in 1752.

⁶ *History of Thomas and Anne Billopp Farmar*, pp. 36 and 39.

CHAPTER V

THOMAS FARMAR BILLOPP

Under the will of Capt. Christopher Billop, Jasper Farmar, the eldest son of his daughter Anne and Judge Farmar, and born on Staten Island in 1707, received 20 pounds. He became an influential man in New York City. Anne's second son Christopher, who would have inherited the Manor of Bentley, died in infancy, so the third son Thomas, born in 1711, fell heir to the property, and assumed the name of Thomas Billopp, according to the conditions of the will of his grandfather, and the inscription on his gravestone.

Thomas Farmar Billopp was about 14 years of age when his grandfather died. It may be remembered, however, that on the 22 of August, 1702, the power of attorney recorded in the Book of Conveyances for Mistress Mary Billop and Mistress Anne Billop, Spinsters of London, and already cited, gave them complete control of all of Capt. Billop's property in America. From this it would appear that first his mother and aunt, and then, upon the death of Mary, that his mother controlled the property until it was inherited by him.

Thomas married Eugenia Stelle, who died on March 22, 1735. She had two daughters, one of whom died quite young. The other, Anne, is mentioned in her father's will. She inherited £100, a silver tea pot and "a large white bed quilt." Anne died in the year 1752.

In his *Annals of Staten Island*, page 154, Clute records without comment the following, which he found among the old records of the county: "Received of Mr. Thomas Billop fourteen hundred and forty five Bushels of Wheate In full for his Majestis Quit rent Due from the Manor of Bentley to the 25th of March Last.

Witness my hand April 30th 1736

Arch^b Kennedy Rec. General."

This, however, covers a very important financial transaction settled by Thomas Billopp when he was 25 years of age. From the receipt we conclude that no rent had been paid by the Bil-

loppts since the granting of the first patent, March 25, 1676. Probably none had been demanded. The first patent for 932 acres states that the yearly rent shall be 20 bushells of "good Winter Wheat," and the second, or Bentley Manor patent of 1687 for 1600 acres (which includes the area covered by the first patent), states that "five Bushells of Good Winter Merchantable Wheate" shall be paid, if demanded, on the 25 of March of each year.

It will be seen that 60 years had elapsed between the date of the first patent and the receipt for rent to 25 March, 1736. At 20 bushels per year this amounts to 1,200 bushels of wheat. From 1687 to 1736 is 49 years, which at 5 bushels per year amounts to 245 bushels, which with the 1,200 bushels, make the above mentioned 1,445, that paid the rent of the Manor of Bentley from the time of the first grant to March 25, 1736. Thomas Billopp no doubt regretted that his grandfather, and later his aunt and mother, had been so neglectful in the matter of rent paying.

"Thomas took for his second wife Sarah, the daughter of Mr. Samuel Leonard,¹ of New Jersey. His wife, Sarah, was the mother of eight children; three sons—Christopher, Thomas and Jasper Farmar; and five daughters, Mary, Elizabeth, Rachel, Sarah, and Katharine. Katharine was probably born after her father's death."

It is stated that "All of Thomas Billopp's children, except Christopher, after their father's death, reassumed the name of Farmar, which fact has added not a little to the mystification of the historians who have attempted to unravel the tangled thread of the family alliance."

As proof of this statement we have the following from the *Collections of the N. Y. Historical Society*, 1870, p. 265.

Rivington's New York Gazetteer, Thursday, February 16, 1775.

Saturday Night last was married by the Rev. Dr. Auchmuty, Alexander Ross, Esq; of Middlesex County, New Jersey, to Miss Sally Farmer, Sister of Christopher Billopp Esq; Member of the Hon. House of Assembly for Richmond County.

Charles Farmar Billopp states (p. 53), that in 1740 Thomas materially assisted his brother Robert to raise a company of 103

¹ Capt. Leonard formerly owned 272 High St., Perth Amboy. See *History, St. Peter's Church in Perth Amboy*, p. 267.

men to take to the war, which gained for the latter his commission as captain.

Paul Micheaux, whose name appears frequently in the histories of Staten Island, wrote in his will, under date of July 12, 1748: "I make my wife and my trusty friend, Thomas Billop, and my two sons executors."² His gravestone stands in the family plot, Green Ridge, near Journeay Ave., and reads: Here lyes y^e Body of | Paul Micaux Aged | 51 years Dec^d. | Aug^t y^e 6 1751 |

In the *Documentary History of New York*, vol. 4, p. 155, it is recorded that Thomas Billopp was a Major, and also a Justice of the Peace in 1739. He appears to have been a man of considerable prominence on the Island.

Billopp's father-in-law, Samuel Leonard, must have in some way interfered with the affairs of Billopp's father, Thomas Farmar, as appears from the following, published in *The New York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post Boy*, May 15, 1749, and reprinted in *N. J. Archives*, Series 1, vol. 12, pp. 538-540.

Mr Parker,

If you have Room in your next Paper, please to insert the following Affidavit, and my Reasons for printing it therein, and you'll oblige your humble Servant,

Thomas Billop.

Whereas Mr. P——p F——h [Philip French] of *New Brunswick*, in *New Jersey*, hath taken a licentious Liberty to asperse my Character, by publickly and falsly reporting,³ "That I was the Author and Contriver of Mr. *Leonard's* obtaining the Patent mentioned in said Affidavit; and that (as he was pleas'd to term it) with a View to take the Bread out of my Father's Mouth": Wherefore, in Justice to myself, and to undeceive many others, I think I can do no less, than publish said Affidavit, and these my Reasons for so doing.

Thomas Billopp.

New-Jersey, Somerset County, April 18th, 1749.

Then appeared personally before me, *John Corle*, Esq; one of his Majesty's Judges of the Court of Quarter Sessions, and Com-

² *Coll., N. Y. Hist. Soc.*, 1895, p. 349.

³ Both these sermons are in the Library of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

mon Pleas, in and for said County, *John Berrien*; who being duly sworn upon the Holy Evangelist of Almighty God, did depose and say, That at sundry Times long before and about the Time that Capt. *Samuel Leonard* obtained a Patent for the erecting and keeping a Ferry over *Rariton* River, on the East Side, opposite to *New-Brunswick*, that the said *Samuel Leonard* often communicated his Intention, in that Affair, to this Deponent; and about the Time of his obtaining said Patent, told this Deponent, That he had not acquainted Mr. *Thomas Billopp* with any Thing relating to that Affair; and that he did not design to mention it to him, by Reason of his Relation, being concerned in the Consequence; and that in Case Mr. *Billopp* should happen to be asked any Questions relating to that Affair, that he might answer justly, that he Knew Nothing of it, and save himself from being blamed. And although it may not have been expressed by the said *Samuel Leonard*, verbatim, or in these very same Words; yet, notwithstanding in Substance this Deposition is positively and exactly the very Truth; and further this Deponent saith not.

John Berrien

Sworn before me John Corle.

Thomas Billopp died in 1750 in the 39th year of his age, and was buried in the family plot at Bentley Manor near the old house and next to his first wife Eugenia. Copies of the gravestone inscriptions are in the chapter on The Old Manor House and Grounds.

An abstract of the will of Thomas Billopp is to be found in *Collections, N. Y. Historical Society*, 1895, pp. 297–298, and a copy is on record in *Liber 17*, p. 218, in the Hall of Records, N. Y. City, where also is preserved the original will of 1749. The following is from a photostat of this original will.

WILL OF THOMAS BILLOPP

In the Name of God Amen I Thomas Billopp of Staten Island Esq^r. being in health and of sound mind and memory calling to mind the uncertainty of life do think fit to make this my last Will and Testament I resign my Soul to God my Creator and Preserver, my Body I desire may be Buried in a decent manner at the discretion of my Executors, and my Temporal Estate I Dispose of as followeth; and although I Will as the Law Wills in

several Cases yet I think it best to Declare my mind therein; *First* I Order my Executors to sell all my Personal Estate not herein after Disposed of at Publick Vendue as soon after my Decease as they shall think proper and to Pay my Debts out of the Produce thereof. *Item* I give to my well beloved Wife Sarah my Negro woman Phillis and her Daughter Dinah, my Riding Chair and her Choice of any one of the Horses I shall Die Possessed of, and also the Sum of five hundred Pounds current money of New York which Sum is to be paid out of the money arising by the Sale of my Lands herein after mentioned, and which Sum I Give her in lieu of her Right of Dower. *Item* I Give to my Eldest Daughter Anne who I had by my first Wife the Sum of One hundred Pounds New York money and my Silver Tea Pot, the Said Sum to be paid out of the money arising by the sale of my Lands. *Item* I give and Devise unto my Eldest Son Christopher All that certain part of my Lands called the Mannor of Bently on Staten Island Beginning on the South side of Staten Island on the Bay by the Water fence which Divides the Lands now Possessed by James Butler and James Seguin my Tenants thence running up towards the Woods Northerly nearly as the said Division fence runs between said Butler and Seguin on a Streight line until it extend within fifteen foot on a course Norwesterd from the South West Corner of said Seguins House thence Northerly nearly along the Road which leads from said Seguins to Jacob Reckhows to where it falls in with the Main Road but upon a streight line, thence runing as the said Main Road runs Easterly to the line between my Land and the Land of Mathias Johnson, thence as my line runeth the several Courses thereof to the Sound or River that parts Staten Island and the Main to Low Water mark thence along the said Sound by Low water mark to Billops Point, thence continuing along low water mark to the place of beginning, and also all the Mines and Minerals in the other Part of the Manor of Bently To have and to hold to my said Son Christopher and to his Heirs and assigns for ever: I also order my Executors to pay to my said Son when he is twenty one years of Age the Over plus of my Personal Estate if any be after paying my just Debts and the Legacy of a Suit of Cloths herein after mentioned and I Desire the Rent of the Land and Interest of the said Overplus herein Devised and bequeathed to him to be applied to his Maintenance and Edu-

cation till he is of the Age of twenty one years But if my said Son should die before he is of the age of twenty one years and leave no lawfull Issue then I Give and Devise the said Land Mines and Minerals to my Son Thomas his Heirs and assigns for ever and Order the said Legacy of the Overplus of my Personal Estate to be paid to him at the Age aforesaid but if my son Christopher should so die and leave such Issue my intent is said Lands Mines and Minerals should Descend to such Issue as the Law directs an Estate of Inheritance in fee Simple should Descend, and the Legacy to go to such Issue And if my said Son Thomas should also Die before he is twenty one years of Age and leave no lawfull Issue then I give and Devise the said Lands, Mines, Minerals and Legacy to my Son Jaspar Farmar Billopp his Heirs and Assigns for ever but if the said Thomas should so die and leave such Issue my intent is that the said Land Mines Minerals and Legacy should Descend and go to such Issue as the Law directs as aforesaid. *Item* I Devise all the Rest and Residue of my Lands Tenements Hereditaments and Real Estate to be Sold by my Executors for the time being, the Survivors or Survivor to them to the best advantage as soon as can conveniently be done to whom I Give full Power and Authority to Sell the same in Fee Simple only Reserving the Mines and Minerals, And after paying the before-mentioned Legacies to my Wife and Daughter, and Debts if there shall not be Personal Estate sufficient I Give and Bequeath the Remainder of the money the said premises shall be sold for to all my children Except my Eldest Son Christopher to be equally Divided among them Male and Female an equal Share and it is my will that if my wife shall bear me a Child after the date hereof that such Child Shall have an equal Share with the last mentioned Children And I will and Desire my Executors to put the said money out at Interest and to Pay the said Portions as the said Children shall respectively be the Boys of Age of Twenty one and the Girls of the age of Eighteen, or shall be Married which shall first happen with the Interest of each respective Portion then become due only Deducting so much of said Interest as shall have been expended in the Maintenance and Education of such Child And in case either of my last mentioned Children shall Die before the time they are to receive their Legacy then such Legacy or Legacys if more than one so die shall be equally Divided among all the rest of my Children without exception of

the Oldest Son, the Issue of any that may be Deceased at such time to receive a share. *Item* it is my Will that if I should Purchase any Lands after the date of this my Will and Dye Seized thereof or of any part thereof all such Lands I Order to be Sold by my Executors for the time being the survivors or survivor of them and after Payment made for such Lands out of the Produce of the Sale then the Overplus I Will to be equally Divided between all my Children without exception, the Issue of any who may be Deceased at the time of Division to enjoy the Parents share and the Shares to be put out at Interest and paid at the respective Ages or times aforesaid in manner aforesaid and if any Die to go as afore is Directed in the next precedeing article. Lastly I Constitute my true and loving Wife Sarah and my Friend Paul Mechaux Executors of this my last Will and Testament and also my Son Christopher Executor when he shall arrive to the Age of twenty one years and my Will is that M^r. Mechaux my Executor have a Compleat Suit of Mourning as a Legacy out of my Personal Estate. I Revoke all other Wills and Declare this to be my last Will and Testament In Witness whereof I have hereunto Set my hand and Seal the fifth day October in the year of Our Lord One thousand Seven hundred and forty nine

Signed Sealed Published and	} Thomas Billopp (Seal)
Declared by the said Thomas	
Billopp to be his last Will and	
Testament in the Presence of us	
Elizabeth Seaman	} Benj ^a : Seaman
Rachel Leonard	

Memorandum: wheas there is no Disposition made of the Testator Thomas Billopps Silver Plate and no fether Bed Given to y^e S^d Testators wife nor y^e family Pictures Particular Disposed of he the Said Testator Did this Tenth Day of October 1749 Call for the will and Order that all his Silver Plate Except y^e Silver Teapot Therein Before Devised Be given and Bequeathed to his said wife Sarah, and also that his said wife Shall have her Choice of all The fether Beds To Take any Two she shall Think Proper Together with with Bolsters and Pillows four Pair of Sheets Bedsteds Callico Curtains Vallins Blakets and all the furneture furneture thereunto Belonging such as Covering Compleet for winter and somer and also that his sai^d wife shall Have all the

Table Linen that shall Be in the house at the Time of y^e Testators Deth and also that his said wife shall have her Choice of all the Looking Glasses to Take One her Choice of all the Chests of Drawes to Take one: one Dressing Table and all the Chears To Take her Choice of one Dozen and further the S^d Testator Doth Give and Bequeath To his Eldest Daughter Anne a Large white Linen Bed Quilt which was her mothers and further he Doth order that Christopher his Eldest son shall have all the family Pictures and also the Rest and Resedu of the Looking Glasses and his Choice next after his mother of the Best fether Bed Bolster & Pillows with the Red Damask Curtains and furniture thereunto Belonging and also my Large Square Copper Cettle And then again the s^d Testator Did Publish & Declare this to Be his Last will and Testament and By us whos names are hereunto subscribed as witnesses attached in his sight and By his Express Directions he Looking upon us at our subscribing our Names hereunto

Tho^s. Billopp (seal)

Memorandum the word have was Interlined Between y^e forth and fifth Lines and the word son Between y^e thirteenth & fortenth Line Before Signing & Publishing
 Rich^d. Charlton Benj^a. Seaman
 Jasp^r: Farmer

City of }
 New York } ss. Be it Remembered that on the sixth day of August 1750 personally came and appeared before me Goldsbrow Banyar thereunto duly authorized &c Benjamin Seaman and made Oath on the Holy Evangelists that he saw Thomas Billop Sign and Seal the within written Instrument purporting to be his Will and heard him publish & declare the same to be and Contain his last will and Testament that at the Time thereof the said Thomas Billop was of sound & disposing Mind & Memory to the best of the Deponents Knowledge & Belief That he the Deponent subscribed his Name as a Witness to the said Will in the presence of the Testator and In his presence also Saw Elizabeth Seaman and Rachel Leonard the other Witnesses to the said Will subscribe their Names as Witnesses thereto

Gw Banyar

Be it remembered That on the sixth day of August 1750, Benjamin Seaman appeared before Me and made Oath on the Holy Evangelists that he saw Thomas Billop sign and seal the within written Instrument and heard him publish & declare the same to be & Contain a Codicil to his last Will and Testament That at the time thereof the said Thomas Billop was of sound & disposing Mind & Memory to the best of his the Deponents Knowledge & Belief And that he the Deponent and Richard Charlton & Jasper Farmer all subscribed their Names as Witnesses to the said Codicil in the presence of the said Thomas Billop. Gw Banyar

At the same time & place also appeared Paul Michaux one of the Executors of the within written Will of Thomas Billop and was duly sworn to the true Execution of the same Will & the Codicil thereto annexed. Before Gw Banyar

Be it remembered That on the twenty second day of September 1750 appeared Sarah Billop Executrix of the within written Will of Thomas Billop and was duly sworn to the true Execution and Performance of the same Before me Gw Banyar

City of }
New York } ss Be it Remembered That on the twenty fifth day of November 1760 personally came and appeared before me Goldsbrow Banyar thereunto delegated and appointed Christopher Billop one of the Executors of the within written Will of Thomas Billop deceased and was duly sworn to the true Execution and Performance of the said Will by taking the Oath of an Executor as by Law appointed Before me Gw Banyar

In Richmond County *Deeds, D*, p. 446, there is Recorded at request of Richard Nickleson the 28 February 1761, Indenture dated 8 January 1761 (34 George 2nd) between Sarah Billopp and Christopher Billopp, surviving Executors of the Last Will of Thomas Billopp late of Staten Island deceased and Richard Nickleson of the city of Perth Amboy, Gentleman. Whereas said Thomas Billopp in his life time and at the time of his death was seized of the Manor of Bently and on or about 5 October, 1749,

made his last Will and Testament, and after divers specific bequests did devise all the rest and residue of his lands etc. to be sold by his executors, the survivors or survivor of them and thereby giving his executors full power and authority to sell the same in fee simple. Testator did appoint his wife Sarah, his friend Paul Micheaux, and his son Christopher, his Executors as by the said last will and Testament remaining in the Secretaries office in the City of New York may more fully appear. Paul Micheaux died since the death of Testator and only two Executors do survive. Executors convey all that tract of land, being a part of the Manor of Bentley “and distinguished on a Map Thereof made by the Name of Lot No 7” [Full description by courses follows]. . . . Beginning at the S. W. corner of William Johnstones Patent at Princes Bay. . . . Thence North Easterly along s^d. Bay to the Place of beginning,” Containing about 103 acres. Consideration £ 500.

Witness

Benjⁿ Seaman

Paul Micheau

Ack. by Benjⁿ. Seaman before

Henry Holland, Master of the

Court of Chancery 25 Feb. 1761

The following is from Richmond County *Deeds, E*, p. 24.

Deed Recorded for Capt William Davis Merchant in London the following Deed of Sale bearing date the first Day of July 1769

Joseph Egbert Clerk

.
Whereas the said Thomas Billopp in and by his last will & Testament among other things have Devised and Bequeathed unto his Daughter the said Mary Davis by her then name of Mary Farmer a Certain Tract of Land Lying and being on the South Side of Staten Island in the province of New York in Richmond County Called Lott No 7 or by such or the like kind of name at or near a Certain place there Called Princes Bay Bounded with Sea Containing by estimation one hundred Acres more or Less and did nominate and appoint Christopher Billopp and Sarah Billopp Executors of his said will as in and by the said in part recited will or the probate thereof may more fully and at large appear.”

CHAPTER VI

COLONEL CHRISTOPHER BILLOPP

Christopher Billopp, the eldest son of Thomas Farmar Billopp, was born in the old house on Staten Island in 1737, inherited the Manor of Bentley, and was the "Tory Colonel" of the American Revolution. He is said to have received an excellent education at a good school in Perth Amboy, and at an early age to have taken great interest in the political questions of the day.

Charles Farmar Billopp makes the following record of the family: "Colonel Billopp was twice married. His first wife was Frances Willett by whom he had two sons, Thomas and John Willett Billopp,¹ and three daughters, Elizabeth, Sarah, and Katherine Billopp. Elizabeth married Mr. Robinson of St. John, New Brunswick, and had four children. The eldest, Frances Robinson, married Doctor Bayard of St. John. The second daughter, Mary Robinson, married Major Short.

"Sarah, Colonel Billopp's second daughter, married Henry Seaman of New York, and had four children—Billopp, who married Miss Kortright; Jaspar and Edmund, unmarried and Frances who married Mr. Townsend.

"The Colonel's third daughter, Katherine died in infancy.

"Colonel Billopp's second wife, Jane Seaman, daughter of Benjamin Seaman, of Staten Island, bore him five daughters, and died in St John, New Brunswick, in 1802, aged forty-eight years. Her daughters were Katharine, who married Hon. John Black of Halifax, and left a son and daughter; Jane, who married Hon. William Black of St John, and had three sons and three daughters; Louisa, who married John Wallace; Mary, who married Archdeacon Willis, and left children, and Anne, who died unmarried."

The following is to be found in the *Names of Persons for Whom Marriage Licenses were issued by the Secretary of the Province of New York previous to 1784*, Albany, 1860:

¹ In *The Church of St. Andrew, Richmond, Staten Island*, p. 97, is recorded "June ye 11, 1769. John Willit Son of Christopher & ————— Billopp was Born ye —————."

1762 November 2 Billop, Christopher & Frances Willett.

1773 Feb. 11 Billopp, Christopher & Jenny Seaman.

Thomas Willett of New York, Merchant, wrote in his will dated December 26, 1766, and proved June 16, 1768: "I make my wife and my son John and my Sons-in-law, Christopher Billop and Thomas Miller and my friend, Joseph Royall, executor." *Coll. N. Y. Hist. Soc.*, 1898, p. 174.

In *Anthon's Notes* we find this record of the family, which makes a slightly different disposition of the Colonel's daughters: From a conversation with Edmund Benjamin Seaman, August 26, 1852: "Miss Jane Seaman was Col. Billop's second wife and there was a great difference in their ages. . . . Two sons of Benjamin Seaman married daughters of Col. Billopp by his first wife; these were Benjamin and Henry. The former was educated at Columbia College in the same class with Alex^r. Hamilton."

Whitehead, in his *Early History of Perth Amboy*, 1856, p. 96, also states that two of Billopp's daughters "married gentlemen of the name of Seaman, whose descendants are numerous in New York and on Staten Island."

The following from the *Collections, N.Y. Hist. Soc.*, 1899, p. 209, is interesting just here: *Abstract of Wills, Liber 29*, p. 194. Will of Isaac Prall of Staten Island. Dated August 15, 1770. Proved, February 1, 1774. "I make Benjamin Seaman, John Micheau, and Christopher Billopp, executors."

Benjamin Seaman and his son-in-law, Christopher Billopp, represented Richmond County in the 31st General Assembly, the last session of which was held April 3, 1775. They each received 6 shillings (75c) a day for the time of their attendance. The Assembly was held in New York City.² On the 23d of February, 1775, they both voted with the Tories against sending delegates to the Continental Congress, the Tories being successful, casting 16 votes against 9 Whigs.³

Among The Colden Papers, *Collections, N. Y. Historical Society*, 1923, occurs the following, which shows that the hoped for reconciliation which the Staten Islanders, Billopp and Seaman, had in mind, was at the time commonly shared by the members of the General Assembly of New York.

² *N. Y. Civil List*, 1883.

³ *Annals of Staten Island*, p. 50.

Members of the General Assembly of New York to Gen.
Thomas Gage
[Copy]

New York May 5th. 1775

Sir

In the Recess of the General Assembly, We who are Members of it, cannot avoid Addressing your Excellency on a Subject of the utmost Importance.

We have long seen with the greatest Anxiety the Progress of the unhappy Contest between Great Britain, and her Colonies; and as we have ardently wished for a cordial Reconciliation, so we have to the utmost of our Power, endeavoured to pursue the Means for attaining so desirable an End. While we were looking up to this Object, encouraged to hope for the Attainment of it, by the Assurances we had that a Spirit of Reconciliation was prevailing in the Mother Country; We were extremely Alarmed at the late Melancholly Transactions in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, ending in Actual Bloodshed. The immediate Effect occasioned by the Intelligence of such important Events, was a general Agitation in the minds of People here, which has since subsided into a fixed confirmed Resolution, to withhold all Supplies and Succours from the Troops under your Excellency's Command while at the same Time they are Associating, and Arming to put themselves in a State of Defence.

Alarmed as we are by the ruinous Consequences which must inevitably follow the prosecution of hostile Measures, and anxiously affected with the Calamities of an Unnatural Civil War, we are induced most earnestly to entreat your Excellency in behalf of Colonies (which however tenacious of their Rights and Liberties, and Jealous of every Infringement of them, can be exceeded in Loyalty and Affection for our most gracious Sovereign, by None of his Subjects) that your Excellency will as far as may be consistant with your Duty, immediately Order a Cessation of further Hostilities, untill his Majesty can be Apprized of the Situation of his American Colonies: From such a Request we entertain the most favorable Expectations, when we reflect on that Humanity and Clemency, which distinguish your Excellency's Character, and which must render a Conflict between Britons, and Americans a Subject of the most disagree-

able Nature to you. While we consider the State of Mind which prevails among the People here, we cannot but mention their Apprehensions at the Report of the Destination of some Troops for this place; should this really be the Case, we must express our wish, that it might also be consistent with your Excellency's Duty, that no Military Force might land or be stationed in this Province.

It behoves us to Acquaint your Excellency that two of the Members of his Majesty's Council of this Province have this Day sailed in the Packet for England, and we flatter ourselves, that the Indulgent Father of his People, will be moved by the distressed Situation of his American Subjects, and that he will permit a Negotiation to take place, which may prevent the further Effusion of Blood, and open a Door for a lasting Accommodation of present Disputes.

We are,

Your Excellency's Most Obedient Humble Servant

John Cruger	Jam ^s Jauncey
Fred Philips	Leb ⁿ Williams
Jacob Walton	Benj ^a Seaman
Daniel Kissam	John Rapalje
Pierre Van Cortland	Sam ^l Gale
S. Boerum	Christopher Billopp
John Coe	Sam ^l Wells

To His Excellency General Gage

During the war Colonel Billopp was very active, and received many communications and orders from those in authority, especially in the year 1777. The following is from *The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, June 9, 1777: "*Extract of a letter from his Excellency Governor Tryon, to Christopher Billopp, Esq. Colonel of the Militia of Richmond County, Staten Island, dated May 19, 1777.*"

"It is my earnest recommendation, that the inhabitants of Richmond County, who had the first opportunity of testifying their loyalty to their Prince, and fidelity to the British constitution, on the arrival of the King's troops, and which was most graciously accepted by his Majesty, should, on this occasion, eagerly follow the approved example of the militia of King's

county, by liberally raising a sum of money for the comfort and encouragement of the Provincial troops raised in this province. I enclose the form of the instrument which is adopted for the inhabitants of this city and county to subscribe; copies of which will be sent to Queen's and Suffolk counties, for a similar purpose. Any suggestions of fears and apprehensions from circumstances of situation, must, and assuredly will be construed into a lukewarmness at this crisis, to the King and the old constitution: Therefore, let the loyal subjects now distinguish themselves by free donations, and dare the worst from men, who have struck at the root of their liberty and property.

We have the Pleasure to inform the Public, that the loyal Inhabitants of Staten Island, have already subscribed *Five Hundred Pounds* for the Encouragement of the Provincial Corps of this Colony, and transmitted the same to our worthy Governor, to be applied to that laudable Purpose. The Subscription in other Parts meets with great Success among his Majesty's loyal Subjects, both in this City and County, and in the Counties upon Long Island, almost every one being desirous to give this Test of Loyalty and Love of constitutional Freedom. Trimmers and some doubtful Characters, it is expected, will be made manifest upon this Occasion, and of course be properly noticed."

Billopp was in command of the Staten Island militia before the war, and later of a regiment of native loyalists, or tories composed chiefly of residents of the Island.

Whitehead in his *Early History of Perth Amboy*, p. 95, states:

"Mr. Billop, or, as he was generally called Colonel Billop—from his holding that rank in the Richmond County Militia, and subsequently in the British army—was a man of courage and energy, of high standing in the province of New York—of the Assembly of which he was a member for some years. On the commencement of hostilities, Mr. Billop warmly engaged on the side of the royalists and aided in raising what was called 'the New Corps,' in which he received a Colonel's commission. It is thought that his services, which were of an active partisan character, were confined to Staten Island."

Whitehead further states (p. 97) that Thomas Farmar [he reassumed the name of Farmar] "unlike his brother Christopher was a staunch whig, and joined the colonists in their struggle for

liberty. He turned out in the militia with his musket as a private, but it is not known that he was in active service.''

Col. Billopp was in the engagement on Staten Island, August 22, 1777, which appears later on from his testimony before the Commission in London, to have been the only action in which he took part. An account of this engagement, together with a letter from a friend of Billopp's, is here copied from *The New York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, Printed by Hugh Gainé at the Bible and Crown, in Hanover-Square, Monday, September 1, 1777:

“New York, September 1. Last Friday se’nnight, in the Morning before Daybreak, a Body of Rebels, under the Command of Messrs. Sullivan, Smallwood, and De Bourg, landed in two Divisions upon the West End of Staten Island. By the Acknowledgment of some of their Officers, now Prisoners here, their Number was at least 2000. One Division of them soon fell in with a Part of the New-Jersey Volunteers, which Brigade was posted, in small Detachments, along the Side of the Island, from Decker’s Ferry to the Point opposite Perth-Amboy, a Distance of fifteen Miles. The Rebels, greatly superior in Numbers, had the Fortune with Success to engage the Detachments that were commanded by Lieut. Col. Lawrence, and Lieut. Col. Barton, who were both made Prisoners with several other Officers, and a considerable Number of Men. They then marched down to Decker’s Ferry, where they burned about 35 Tons of Hay, and set fire to a Barn. As soon as the Alarm had reached Head Quarters, Brigadier General Campbell marched with the 52d British and 3d Battalion of Waldeck, leaving a Regiment of Anspach to guard the Camp and Redoubts. Upon the approach of the regular Troops the Rebels instantly marched off with all Speed. In the mean Time Brigadier General Skinner had collected those of his Corps which had been dislodged from their Stations, and detached Major Tympany with 25 Men to gain Information of the Route with the Enemy had taken. The Major came up with a Number of them at the House of Dr. Parker, which they were plundering. He attacked them immediately, killing several, and took the rest Prisoners; among the killed was Mr. Smallwood’s Brigade Major. It was now known that the Rebels on this Side had gone off towards Richmond; they

were eagerly pursued, and on the Road beyond that Village an Account was received from Lieut. Col. Dongan that his Post had been attacked by the second Division of the Enemy, and obliged to retire (which they did with very little Loss) towards Lieut. Col. Allen, who had himself very seasonably retired, and taken post on a Height near Prince's-Bay, where Lieut. Col Dongan had joined him. A large Body of the Rebels had twice made a Shew of attacking them, but finally declined it, and marched off towards the Old Blazing-Star. Those two gallant Officers soon determined to pursue them, and now gave Information to Brigadier General Skinner that they were on the Way, and requested Orders, which were immediately dispatched to them, to proceed, and at all Events to attack the Enemy as soon as possible; informing him at the same Time, that their Brother Volunteers from the right were coming up with all Speed to join them, and that the Regular Troops with General Campbell were at Hand to support them. These Orders were executed with equal Spirit and Success. Notwithstanding a great Disparity of Numbers, these new Troops attacked the Rear of the Enemy, consisting of Smallwood's and other Corps that are foremost in Reputation among the Rebels, with an Intrepidity and Perseverance that would have done Honour to Veterans. A considerable Number of the Enemy were killed, and about 300 taken Prisoners, including 21 Officers, *viz.* 1 Lieut Col.. 3 Majors, 2 Captains, 10 Lieutenants, 3 Ensigns, 1 Surgeon, and 1 Officer wounded. By this Time General Campbell had got up one Piece of Cannon, with a Detachment of the Artillery. That Piece was soon followed by two or three more, and a well directed Fire of round and Grape Shot had a great Effect on the Rebel Boats, and on those of their People who had got over to the Jersey Shore. Our Loss, in the whole Affair, is 5 killed, 7 wounded, and 84 missing. Among the wounded were Lieutenant Col. Dongan and Major Barnes, both Officers of distinguished Bravery. The former, a young Gentleman of uncommon Merit, both as a Man and a Soldier, is since dead of his Wounds. His Loss is greatly regretted, and his Memory will ever be dear to all those who had the Pleasure of his Acquaintance. Major Barnes, tho' shot through the Lungs, it is hoped may possibly recover.

“The Rebels, by this Attempt, have indeed got a good deal of Plunder, chiefly from the Inhabitants, of which they may possibly be ready to boast; for they have often boasted of Exploits which honest Men would deem a Disgrace; and they have Reason on this Occasion, to blush for their Conduct.

“Lieut. Col. Edward Vaughan Dongan, Commandant of the 3d Battalion of New-Jersey Volunteers, was the youngest Son of Walter Dongan, Esq; late of Staten-Island,—was bred to the Law, and supported a most amiable Character. He was in his 29th Year, and has left a young distressed Widow to lament the Death of an affectionate Husband. Their only Child died a few Hours before him.”

“Staten Island, 28th August, 1777.

“Sir,

“Having seen a Paragraph in Mr. Robertson’s Gazette of this Date, giving an erroneous Narrative of the action on Staten-Island the 22d Instant, I am induced from a Belief of your Impartiality, and from Justice to the Troops who rescued the two Battalions of Dongan and Allen, from impending Ruin, to request that you, as a Servant of the Public, will take the Trouble to ask an impartial Spectator, Colonel Billop, of the Staten Island Militia, for a Confirmation of the Truth of the following Facts, *viz.* That the 52d Regiment on coming up to the Ground occupied by the above Battalions, then engaged with the Rear of the Rebels, marched briskly in their Front and took the Lead, under a pretty heavy Fire; that soon afterwards a large Body of the Enemy, about 150, laid down their Arms; that this happened in Consequence of the 52d Regiment having, by spirited Exertions, got on the Flank of the Enemy and charged with Bayonet; that there were no other Troops then present; that the 52d was considerably advanced before the Cannon, and in Front of the Provincials; Colonel Billop and a few loyal brave Men under his Command, was present to all this, and at the Head of the 52d Regiment, with the comman. Officer of that Corps.

I am Sir

Your Humble Servant,

A Spectator

To Mr. Gaine, Printer, New-York.

Billopp was active in enforcing the order prohibiting communication between Staten Island and New Jersey, and the patriots of New Jersey were very hostile toward him, taking him prisoner on two occasions.

The New Jersey Gazette, for June 10, 1778, contains the following item: “*Extract of a letter from Elizabeth-Town, June 6.*

“Last night Capt. Nathaniel Fitz Randolph of Woodbridge, with a party of 15 volunteers, landed on Staten Island, surprised and made prisoners 13 of the militia of the island who were on guard; also Col. Christopher Billop Farmer, Lieut Daniel Winants, and one more not on duty; without firing a musket, or any accident happening to him or his party. It ought to be mentioned in commendation of this worthy officer and his brave followers, that altho’ the law of retaliation would have justified their marking their route with devastation and ruin, they were careful not to do the least injury to any peaceable Inhabitant.—But O ye destructive, butchering, British monsters, beware!—we are not obliged to delay retaliation any longer!—therefore, as you value the safety of your friends on the island, do not set such another example as that at Middletown, for the consequences may be fatal to the tories on the island, in spite of all your efforts to protect them!”

Rivington’s New York Gazetteer, Wednesday, June 17, 1778, contains the following: “We are informed, that the party which surprized Christopher Billop, Esq., at Staten Island, carried him to Woodbridge in Jersey, where he remained until an order was sent thither to remove him to Morris-Town, where it is said he is confined in goal. Mr. Fitzrandolph, of Woodbridge, conducted the enterprize, and treated him very kindly. Mr. Fitz Randolph had some time before been enlarged from his parole upon an exchange of prisoners.”

In *Anthon’s Notes* under date of June 5, 1851, he states that he called on the Rev. Mr. Van Pelt whose story of the capture of Billopp is as follows. “Col Billopp attended a ball at Disosway house near the present Rossville. The Disosways were openly tories but secretly patriots. [Mrs. Disosway was Capt. FitzRaldolps sister.] Capt. Randolph hearing of this determined to capture him. During the ball Randolph looked in for a moment through a door to observe in what manner Billop was

dressed, so as not to make a mistake as to the person. He was recognized by some who knew him, who trembled for his safety. As Billopp was returning home on horseback in the morning, fatigued and half asleep, Randolph suddenly presented himself, seized him and made off with his prize." On April 22, 1852, Mr. Stuart F. Randolph at his residence 159 Hudson St. told Mr. Anthon that "a certain colonel on Staten Island once offered £100 for Nathaniel's head. The captain retaliated by offering the same sum for the colonel's head, but said he thought he would have to go and get it himself, and he went to Billop's point and took the colonel there (perhaps Billop)."

Regarding the prisoners taken on Staten Island by Capt. Fitz Randolph and his men, we find the following in the *Minutes of the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey*:

8th June, 1778.

The Council met at Princeton

Present His Excellency the Governor, Mr Fenemore, Mr. Elmer, Mr Imlay, Mr. Condict, Co^l. Drake.

Agreed that John Church be dismissed from his confinement at this place.

Agreed that the Governor be desired to write to Gen^l Washington on the subject of the exchange of Prisoners taken on Staten Island by Cap^t Fitz Randolph.

We learn from *The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, July 27, 1778, that "Major Moncrieff and Col. Billop of Staten-Island, who have been lately made Prisoners by the Enemy, have been liberated, and are returned to their respective Homes."

The New Jersey Gazette, for Wednesday, June 17, 1778, gives an account of what befell one of the vessels engaged in patrolling the waters of the Kills.

"Last Friday morning, says a correspondent, Brigadier-General Winds, with about 40 militia stationed at Elizabeth-Town, went to Amboy, and there so roughly saluted an armed brig belonging to his *pacific* majesty, which lay between the church in Amboy and Col. Billop's house on Staten-Island, and had for three or four days been a terror to the well-affected inhabitants about Woodbridge and Amboy, as to make her slip her cables and make off, in which she was greatly favoured by a fair breeze

of wind, or she must probably have either struck or ran on shore. Our shot made great havoc among her rigging, and did considerable damage to her hull, and there is great reason to believe, did some execution among her men.”

We next read in *The N. J. Gazette* for December 16, 1778, that the capturer of Billopp had been honored: “We hear that the Legislature of this State have ordered a genteel sword to be presented to Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph, of Woodbridge, in consideration of his merit and services.”

Also in the same issue of that newspaper, that: “The Council and Assembly in joint meeting, have appointed . . . Capt. Nathaniel Fitz Randolph Esq. Naval officer. . . . Elisha Boudinot, Esq. Commissary of Prisoners for this State.”

Elisha Boudinot was a name to be remembered by Col. Billopp as we shall see later. Considerable confusion has resulted from the act of his parents in naming him Elisha, when he already had a brother nine years older by the name of Elias, coupled with the fact that they each were commissary of prisoners, one for the state and the other for the United Colonies. Col. Simcoe as well as many others has got them mixed. “He was elected commissary of prisoners for that State by joint meeting, December 12, 1778. The similarity in the names of the two brothers and the offices they held might lead to some confusion, unless the reader is reminded that Elias Boudinot was commissary general of prisoners, while his brother Elisha was commissary of prisoners for the State of New Jersey only.”⁴

Elisha studied law with his elder brother, and became a judge. Elias was chosen president of Congress, November 4th, 1782, and according to Hatfield “when the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain was ratified, April 15, 1783, he had the honor of affixing to it his signature.” In 1795 Elias became Director of the Mint.

Next it was Captain Fitz Randolph’s turn to be captured in his home by a raiding party from the British army, a few minutes after his return from one of his nocturnal visits to Staten Island.

Extract of a letter from a Correspondent at Woodbridge, dated February 10, 1779.

⁴ *The Life, Public Services, Addresses and Letters of Elias Boudinot, LL.D.*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

“Last Tuesday about 3 o’clock in the morning, a party of the New-Levies from Staten-Island, came over into Woodbridge, and marched up into the town undiscovered, to the house of Charles Jackson, in which there happened to lay that night a scout of Continental troops from Bonem-Town, consisting of twelve men.—The centinel did not discover them till they had well nigh surrounded the house, it being very dark, when he fired and ran off making his escape; the rest being unfortunately asleep, were taken by surprize without making any resistance. Their principal object was Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph, who lived at this house. He had just returned from Staten-Island, having been over there with a small party chief of the night, and was but a few minutes in the house before he was alarmed by the firing of the centinel, when they instantly rushed into the house and seized him and Mr. Jackson, with the scout as above. The party were gone before the inhabitants had time to collect, without doing any other damage except plundering the house of a few trifling articles, taking the shoe-buckles out of the womens shoes, which was as little or more than could be expected, considering the usual practice of the British troops, as the men were restrained from plundering by their officer, said to be a Captain Ryerson, of Buskirk’s regiment, who seemed actuated by principles of honour and humanity; and upon this occasion, imitated the laudable example of Captain Randolph, who has not only distinguished himself by his activity and bravery, but by his politeness and generosity towards such as he hath taken prisoners, never allowing his men to plunder—a practice most ignominious and base, by which Britons have, in the present contest with America, greatly disgraced themselves, and deserve to be forever despised in which their principal officers have joined, and so sunk themselves to a level with the meanest pilfering soldier.”—*New Jersey Gazette*, Wednesday, Feb. 17, 1779.

It is evident that Col. Billopp was considered a desirable prisoner, and it was not long before an effort was made to retake him, which was again accomplished by men from Woodbridge.

The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury, March 22, 1779, states: “Two or three different Parties of them [rebels] have been lately at the Seat of Col. Christopher Billop of the same Island in order to captivate him once more, with a View to get him for an Exchange.”

The date of this second capture can be fixed from the following printed in *The New Jersey Gazette*, for Wednesday, June 30, 1779: "This day week Col. Billop, alias Farmer, was taken at his own house on Staten Island, by a small party of Continental Troops."

Rivington's Royal Gazette, Saturday, July 3, 1779, states: "On Wednesday the 23d ult a party of rebels about twenty in number landed on Staten-Island near Col. Billopp's House, under cover of some trees; and it is supposed must have had a signal informing them of his being at home, for they came up undiscovered to his house and took him prisoner, abused him and his family, and most inhumanly attempted to bayonet his wife and children. Not satisfied with adding these insults to their distress, tho' Mr. Billopp was unarmed and made not the least resistance, they kicked him before them to the boat, and wounded him with their bayonets, behaving in every respect like a parcel of inhuman savages." In *Anthons Notes*, June 5, 1851, he writes: "A Mr Mersereau with whom I came up on the stage from Richmond on the previous Saturday, said that Col. Billopp was taken in his house, that Capt Randolph [not Randolph this time] would not give him time to get his hat, but hurried him off, although the colonel's men were posted at a very short distance entirely unconscious. In crossing the Sound they kept the part of the boat where Billopp was placed constantly toward the Staten Island shore so that the enemy might be deterred from firing through fear of harming him."

We quote from Dally's *Woodbridge and Vicinity*, page 259: "A great deal has been written about the capture of Col. Christopher Billop at his residence near Billop's Point, Staten Island, on the 23d of June, 1779. Some say that Capt. Nathaniel Fitz Randolph was the leader in the affair;⁵ this is strenuously denied by others who declare that Capt. Fitz Randolph had nothing to do with it. [Fitz Randolph was in jail in N. Y. in June, 1779. W. T. D.] As Robert Coddington's father was a participant in the affair and a relative of Fitz Randolph (the two being brothers-in-law), I went to see Robert, the son, one day to enquire whether he had heard his father, the elder Robert, mention

⁵ Whitehead, p. 95.

the matter. He said that he had heard the story from his father's lips, and that it was an unaccountable mistake which ascribed the leadership in this undertaking to the Captain. David Coddington was the chief of the daring party who captured the influential Tory. Four or five comprised the company. David and Robert Coddington and Peter Latourette were among them. It is said that for a long time watchers were stationed in the steeple of St Peter's Church at Perth Amboy, who kept a sharp look-out on the Billop mansion across the water. At length the Colonel was discovered walking through his grounds. They knew, therefore, that he might be found at home. The night of the 23d was very dark, and the adventurers launched their boat in profound silence, rowing across the harbor with muffled oars. From a black woman they had obtained the countersign, with which they expected to pass all the guards in safety. Having landed, they approached the house in "Indian file" and entered it without arousing the enemy. Col. Billop had gone to bed. The party quickly secured him and then hastened to the shore, taking the usual precautions against an outcry by their prisoner. One of the men had taken the Colonel's horse, a beautiful animal, from the stable. But the steed refused to enter the water, whereupon the soldier shot him. Immediately the boat glided from its covert, for the British were thoroughly alarmed by the startling report of the gun. The audacious Jersey men were not discovered, but arrived safely on the opposite shore.

"Billop was sent to the Burlington Jail in November, put in chains and permitted to subsist on bread and water only, in retaliation for the cruelties imposed by the British on their American prisoners—especially on John Leshier and Capt. Fitz Randolph, who were being harshly treated by their jailers at this time."

"The Tory Colonel remained in custody at Burlington until December 26th, when he was exchanged for an American officer."

In *Anthon's Notes* is the following: "Thursday, June 24th. Mr Henry I. Seaman on board the Staten Island steamboat. The account which represents Col. Billopp to have been taken from his house when captured is the true one. Mr Benjamin Seaman lived at the old Bedell house, which is a little beyond Mr. Henry I Seaman's on the road to Rossville. After Col. Billopp's return

from imprisonment he used regularly to come up from Bently to Mr. Benj. Seaman's to sleep. He was a very hard snorer. Mr Seaman's father has often set up to watch while he slept. The skirmish during Sullivan's attack took place on the slope towards Rossville after crossing a brook now and always known as Killy-Fish Brook. Old Mr. Bedell, now dead, was on that day engaged in driving his team between Rossville and Perth Amboy and was pressed by the British into their service, but afterwards suffered to depart."

On October 27, 1779, the British under Col. John Graves Simcoe went over to New Jersey from Staten Island on a raiding expedition,⁶ and in one of the encounters with the local militia the Colonel's horse was killed, and he was taken a prisoner. He likewise was sent to the gaol at Burlington, and in his journal, there is a statement about Billopp being "chained down to the floor for several weeks and fed on bread and water."

As parts of Simcoe's Journal⁷ are very interesting reading to Staten Islanders, we extract the following: "On the 9th of October [1779], it was hinted to Lieut. Col. Simcoe, to hold his corps in readiness for embarkation. On the 19th it marched for that purpose; the cavalry to Jericho, where they were to remain under the command of Lieut. Col. Tarleton, and the infantry to Jamaica, which proceeded to Yellow-hook, and embarked on the 24th."

Troops re-landed; "and were ordered to continue in readiness to embark at the shortest notice. The Queen's Rangers marched to Richmond, on Staten Island: they relieved a regiment which had been very sickly while there. Lieut. Col Simcoe immediately ordered their huts to be destroyed, and encamped his corps; Signals, in case of alarm, were established on the island by General Paterson, who commanded there.

"There was a general rumour of our intended attack on New York. Lt. Col. Simcoe had information that fifty flat-boats, upon carriages, capable of holding seventy men each, were on the road

⁶ *New Jersey Gazette*, Oct. 27 and Nov. 3, 1779.

⁷ *Simcoe's Military Journal. A History of the Operations of a Partisan Corps called The Queen's Rangers, Commanded by Lieut. Col. J. G. Simcoe During the War of The American Revolution.* New York, 1844. See Pro. Nat. Sci. Assn. of Staten Island, June 13, 1896.

from Delaware to Washington's army, and that they had been assembled to Van Vacter's bridge upon the Rariton. He proposed to the Commander in Chief to burn them. Sir Henry Clinton approved of his plan, as did Earl Cornwallis, and directed it to be put into execution." p. 109.

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"On the 25 October, [1779] by eight o'clock at night, the detachment, which has been detailed, marched to Billop's-point, where they were to embark." p. 110.

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"The batteaux, and boats, which were appointed to be at Billop's-point, so as to pass the whole over by *twelve o'clock* at night, did not arrive till *three o'clock* in the morning. No time was lost; the infantry of the Queen's Rangers were landed; they ambuscaded every avenue in the town; the cavalry followed as fast as possible. As soon as it was formed, Lt. Colonel Simcoe called together the officers; he told them of his plan, "that he meant to burn the boats at Van Vacter's bridge, and crossing the Rariton, at Hillsborough, to return by the road to Brunswick . . . ,'" p. 111.

Went to Bound brook, p. 114.

Eighteen boats at Van Vacter's bridge. p. 114.

Boats destroyed—burned.

Proceeded to Somerset Court-house and burned the court-house, p. 115.

Proceeded toward Brunswick, p. 115.

"Simcoe heard the words" "now, now," and found himself, when he recovered his senses, prisoner with the enemy, his horse being killed with five bullets, and himself stunned by the violence of his fall. His imprisonment, the circumstances which attended it, and the indelible impressions which it has made on his memory, cannot even at this distance, be repeated without the strongest emotions: as they merely relate to personal history, they, with his correspondence with Sir. H. Clinton, Governor Livingstone, Col. Lee, Gen. Washington, &c. are referred to the appendix." p. 117.

"On the 7th of November [1779] Governor Livingston came to Borden Town; from his conversation Lt. Col. Simcoe had hopes

of an immediate exchange: he was therefore much surprised the next evening, on the arrival of a militia party conducting Col. Billop of the Loyal militia of Staten Island, to be accosted by the Serjeant who commanded it, and informed that he was a prisoner, and must be confined, and marched the next morning to Burlington jail. Col. Hoogland with great humanity interfered, and, upon their paroles carried Cols. Billop and Simcoe in his own light waggon to Burlington the next morning. Mr. Killock, who accompanied them thither, returned, as he must have also been confined, which Lt. Col. Simcoe by no means would permit. Lt. Col. Simcoe, his servant and M'Gill, who had come from Staten Island, were confined, and no person was admitted to speak to them [p 268]. Col. Billop was treated as the following mittimus directed, and received at the same time a letter from Boudinot, the Commissary of Prisoners:

“To the keeper of the Common Jail for the county of Burlington. Greeting.

“You are hereby commanded to receive into your custody, the body of Col. Christopher Billop, prisoner of war, herewith delivered to you, and having put irons on his hands and feet, you are to chain him down to the floor in a close room, in the said jail; and there so detain him, giving him bread and water only for his food, until you receive further orders from me, or the commissary of Prisoners for the State of New Jersey, for the time being. Given under my hand at Elizabeth Town, this 6th day of Nov. 1779.

Elisha Boudinot, Com. Pris. New Jersey.”

“Sir.—Sorry I am that I have been put under the disagreeable necessity of a treatment towards your person that will prove so irksome to you; but retaliation is directed, and it will, I must sincerely hope, be in your power to relieve yourself from the situation by writing to New York, to procure the relaxation of the sufferings of John Leshier, and Capt. Nathaniel Randal.⁸ It seems, nothing short of retaliation will teach Britons to act like men of humanity.

“I am, sir, your most humble servant,

“Elisha Boudinot, Com. S. Pris.

⁸ Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph was frequently referred to as Captain Randal.

“Elizabeth Town, Nov. 6, 1779.

“Col. Christopher Bellop, Burlington.”

“John Leshier had murdered a Loyalist, whom he had waylaid, and, in the room of being instantly executed as a murderer, and as he deserved, was confined in irons. Nathaniel Randal was the skipper of a vessel, being a private militia man he was not permitted his parole, which indulgence is only extended to officers. Col. Billop, who was to retaliate for these people, was a gentleman of excellent character, and considerable property; who, in the House of Assembly, where he had a seat, had uniformly opposed those measures which led to a rupture with Great Britain; and, on the breaking out of the war, had accepted of the commission of Colonel of the Staten Island militia: so that nothing could possibly suggest to Boudinot the reflection he made on the national humanity, but that he could do it with impunity; and that it did not misbecome his birth and extraction, being the son of a low Frenchman, who kept an ale-house at Prince Town.”
p. 269.

Gov. Livingston gave the following answer to Lt. Col. Simcoe's letter, demanding to know what persons would be received in exchange for him, and requesting his parole to Staten Island.
[p. 271.]

“Mount Holly, Nov. 10th, 1779.

“Sir,—I have received your letter, without date. Your confinement, and the order relative to Col. Billop, is in consequence to the advice of the Privy Council; till they rescind their resolve, I am not at liberty to deviate from it. I hope, however, that you will not be disagreeably situated, except as to the confinement. The exchange proposed for you and Col. Billop (which is Col. Reynolds, Mr. Fitzrandolph, Leshier, and Jackson, and as many other privates as will make it equal) has I suppose, before this time reached New York. If you are not soon released, it will be the fault of the British. For my part, I heartily wish it may be effected in the speediest manner, and not only for the sake of our citizens in captivity in New York, but also from sentiments of humanity towards Col. Billop and yourself, as I am not gratified by the sufferings of any man; and I am sure the Governor does not, and fully persuaded the Council do not harbour any per-

sonal resentment against Col. Billop. Unfortunately for that gentleman, the treatment of some of our citizens in New York, has induced this State to consider retaliation their indispensable duty, and it is his particular misfortune to be in our possession at this melancholy juncture.

“Respecting your request of going to Staten Island on your parole, I hope your exchange will be negotiated without it; and, for that purpose, any of your letters on that subject shall be cheerfully transmitted to New York, by

“Sir, your humble servant, William Livingston.”

On Nov. 10, 1779, Simcoe wrote to Livingston asking “whether Mr. Randolph is or is not a Captain? he being styled such in M. Boudinot’s letter to Col. Billop.” p. 272.

To the above, under date of “Mount Holly, 11th November, 1779,” Livingston wrote:

“Mr Fitzrandolph is no officer in our militia but, nevertheless, of so respectable a character that we are universally solicitous for his release; and, though a gentleman of the strictest honour, has been treated with the greatest indignity by your superiors.”

In a letter [date ?] to Sir. Henry Clinton, Simcoe stated “Colonel Billop was confined, from his parole given to the Continental army, the same day with me.” p. 278.

On p. 279 Simcoe relates of a plot for his escape from prison.

Under date of Nov. 29, 1780, Gov. Livingston wrote to Simcoe that “Mr. Fitzrandolph, one of our citizens, who is proposed to be exchanged for you and Col. Billop, is at this very time used in the same manner, and is no more a criminal than any man that is not so.” p. 280.

Lt. Col. Simcoe writes to General Washington, [date ?] p. 283 in which letter he states: “I was allowed my parole, was taken from it the 9th, and have ever since been confined a close prisoner in Burlington gaol, with Col. Billop, who is in irons and chained to the floor, to retaliate for F. Randolph and Leshier, the latter of whom is (said to be) confined in the same manner in New-York: my mittimus hath not expressed what I am imprisoned for; but, by the tenor of Governor Livingston’s letter, I suppose it is to retaliate for the former of those citizens, whom he allows to be a private soldier, and who is simply confined as such.

“Colonel Billop joins me in my application, sir, to you for redress from our unparalleled usage.”

Mentions Billopp in other sentences.

“General Washington never answered this letter, but in a very few days Colonels Billop and Simcoe were exchanged.” p. 285.

“Lt. Col Simcoe was emancipated on the 27th of December from Burlington goal.”

“Lt-Col Simcoe proceeded without molestation, and arrived at Richmond on the 31st” [Dec., 1779]. p. 286.

“On the 15th Jan. [1780] early in the morning the rebel detachment of near three thousand men, under the command of the person styled Lord Stirling crossed the ice and entered Staten Island.” p. 121.

Winter quarters of the Queen’s Rangers were at Richmond. pp. 119, 121.

“The whole force on the Island being under one thousand eight hundred effective men.” p. 121. . . .

“On these ideas, he [Simcoe] desired Col. Billop, (who commanded the militia of Staten Island,) to get them to assemble to garrison Richmond; but neither entreaties, the full explanation of the advantage such a conduct would be of, nor the personal example of Col. Billop, had any effect: not a man could be prevailed upon to enter the garrison. They assembled to drink at various public houses, and to hear the news, or were busy in providing for the temporary security of their cattle and effects; and these were not disaffected persons, but men who were obnoxious to the rebel governors, many of them refugees from the Jersies, some who had every reason to expect death, if the enemy succeeded, and all the total destruction of their property.” p. 124.

The New Jersey Gazette for Wednesday, June 7, 1780, contains the following: “*Extract of a letter from Woodbridge, May 29, 1780.* Captain Randolph was exchanged on Friday last, after being a prisoner fifteen months, to the great joy of all his friends, but greater mortification to all the traders [traitors] and tories in this quarter.”

In his *Early History of Perth Amboy*, Whitehead states (p. 95) that Captain Fitz Randolph was exchanged in May, 1780, for Captain Jones of the British Army, who was captured for the purpose by some of Fitz Randolph’s followers at what was known

as the Half-way House, between the New Blazing Star and Ryerson's Ferry, on Staten Island."

We quote further concerning Fitz Randolph from Dally's *Woodbridge and Vicinity* (p. 255): "He was conveyed to New York and imprisoned and cruelly treated until May 26th, 1780, a period of about a year and four months; at which time he was exchanged; it is supposed, for a Capt. Jones of the British army. This Jones was seized by some of Fitz Randolph's men, for this very purpose, at the old stone tavern at Port Richmond, Staten Island. The story of this capture was told to me by Robert Coddington. William Bowman, of Staten Island, a watchman, used to tell it also.

"It seems that Peter Latourette, a Woodbridge man, familiarly known as 'Pete Tourette,'⁹ found out that Capt. Jones was sick at Port Richmond and resolved to secure him as an exchange for Randolph. Peter was fully equal to the task. His courage was unquestioned and his strength, remarkable. He stood six feet and two inches in his stockings, and was stout in proportion. He and three or four kindred spirits, all Woodbridge men, crossed to Staten Island by daylight, in citizens' dress, and went to the tavern. The guard, a small one, supposed the newcomers were private citizens and paid very little attention to them until they began to wrestle with each other. This pastime amused the soldiers greatly, and they became very free in their bearing toward the Jerseymen. The latter heard the sick officer cough and calculated, from the direction whence the sound came, just the room in which he could be found. The guard, unsuspecting of danger, stacked their guns in the hall and proceeded to the supper-table, spread in an adjoining room. Latourette did not intend to execute his plan until after dark; but this chance was too good to be lost. He seized the guns and armed his men, and then quickly entered the British Captain's apartment and carried him out of the house, stuffing his handkerchief into the sick man's mouth to prevent his giving the [p. 256] alarm. The party hastened to the shore, sprang into a boat and rowed to Bergen Point with their prisoner, who was lodged in the Bergen jail until he was exchanged for Capt. Fitz Randolph.

⁹ "Peter is disrespectfully called a 'thief' and 'an infernal fiend' by the Tory papers in New York. The stories of his cruelty to the Tories may be true, but we find no evidence to support them except in the journals alluded to." See *Hatfield's Elizabeth*, p. 507.

“No sooner was the gallant Nathaniel released than he entered the active service again; but alas, within two months the heroic soldier passed away—to the land, we trust, where the march of hostile battalions and the tumults of war are unknown. He died of the wounds he received at or near Springfield, N. J., on the 23d of June—his death occurring one month afterward, July 23, 1780 [?]. He was buried in the Presbyterian Church-yard at Woodbridge with the honors of war. He was once married—to Experience Inslee, afterward the wife of James Coddington.”

Previous to the above quotation, namely on pages 245–246, Dally states that: “In June, 1780, the British opened their campaign in New Jersey by moving their troops (about 6,000 well-equipped soldiers) into the State via Staten Island and Elizabethtown . . .” “They had entered Elizabethtown on the night of the 6th, on the 7th they were checked at Connecticut Farms, and in the evening they were hurrying down to the ‘Point’ in a drenching rain to escape the pitiless pursuit of the Jersey soldiers . . .” “In the two days brisk skirmishing (of the 7th and 8th), parties of militia were collected from all the towns adjacent . . .” “In a letter directed to ‘Captain David Edgar, 2d Regt. Light Dragoons, at or near Crompond,’ dated at Elizabethtown, June 30th, 1780, Lieut. [James] Paton thus tells the story.” Paton first states that he was wounded on Thursday [8th] which appears to have been the last day of the fight when the British retreated to Elizabethtown, and then continues: “I am not able to give you the particulars of the expedition, only the brave Capt. Nathl. Fitz Randolph was wounded the last day the British troops marched to and burned all Springfield [June 23], and is since dead and much lamented. Smith Bloomfield is also mortally wounded and not expected to live I believe.”

Further testimony as to when Capt. Fitz Randolph died is contained in the following from the newspapers of the day:

Major-General Green’s Orders

Head Quarters, Springfield, June 24th, 1780.

The General congratulates the troops etc., and then continues:

On Wednesday sennight died, that Patriot and terror to the abettors of tyranny, Captain Nathaniel Fitzrandolph, of Woodbridge, of a wound he received the preceding Friday in pursuing the enemy on their retreat from Springfield. The ball entered

his left arm, below the shoulder, penetrated his body, and came out at the right breast. It may justly be said of him, that he was a kind and tender husband, an indulgent parent, a worthy citizen, a sincere friend, a brave and valiant soldier, possessed of honour and humanity, as acknowledged by his enemies. During this contest he has been twice wounded before the fatal one which terminated his life; and twice a prisoner, and was confined in the provost of New-York for upwards of two years. His remains were interred on the Thursday following, with the honors of war, attended by a large concourse of respectable inhabitants from the neighbouring townships. He has left an amiable wife and two lovely children to bewail his loss; and is much lamented by all that had the pleasure of his acquaintance. *The New Jersey Journal*, July 5, 1780 (*N. J. Archives, Second Series*, vol. IV, p. 476.)

“Nathaniel Fitz Randolph, a noted Partizan in the Rebel Service died a few Days ago of the Wounds he received at Springfield some Days since in a Skirmish with the British Troops.”—*New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, Monday, July 3, 1786.

“A few days ago died, of the wounds he received in nobly fighting in defence of his country, Nathaniel Fitz-Randolph, Esq. late of Woodbridge, in this state. This Gentleman’s zeal and activity, joined with the most intrepid bravery, had long rendered him obnoxious to the vindictive rage and cruelty of a *British enemy*, who has stained the pages of modern history with indelible marks of inhuman barbarity and savage cruelty. Twice he fell into their ruthless hands, and suffered all the tortures of long confinement in the provost-guard at New-York; from whence he had lately been delivered.” *The New Jersey Gazette*, Wednesday, July 12, 1780.

The writer has recently examined and photographed the gravestone erected to the memory of Captain Fitz Randolph in the churchyard at Woodbridge. The inscription reads: Sacred | to the Memory of | Cap.ⁿ Nathanael Fitz | Randolph, who died | July y^e 23.^d A^oD. 1780 | In the xxxiii Year of | his Age.

Here lies beneath this Stone repos’d
Patriot Merit strait[ly] hous’d;
His Country call’d he lent an Ear,
Their Battles fought, & rested here.

E. Price.

Dally in a foot-note states: "Lieut Paton in his letter to Capt. Edgar (already quoted), fixed Fitz Randolph's death in the latter part of June. As he was a prisoner his information on this point was limited." Dally was unacquainted with the notices in the newspapers quoted above which substantiate Paton in placing the death of Captain Fitz Randolph before the date mentioned on his gravestone which was probably erected long after his death.

The following record from *Anthon's Notes* of a conversation with Dr. J. T. Harrison at his residence, Port Richmond, Staten Island, Saturday, February 21st, 1852, is important in this connection. Dr. Harrison was born and brought up in Woodbridge, N. J., so his account of the time is of value. "We commenced our conversation," writes Anthon, "by speaking of Nathaniel Fitz-Randolph. Randle is the same name. He received his fatal wound near Elizabethtown, not at Springfield. The spot was a little on the Staten Island side of it, (Elizabethtown) on the plain that runs from the town to the sound. Knyphausen's troops then occupied the Point. The United States troops were in Elizabethtown after the affair at Springfield. The people of Elizabethtown expressed great feeling on account of the delay in the U. S. troops coming to reinforce them. If this had been done, they hoped they would be able to drive Knyphausen into the Sound or capture him. They therefore carried on for perhaps 24 hours a desultory warfare in which Randle, who was very much esteemed was killed. Gen. Washington, who was at Morristown, was cautious, thinking Knyphausen's attack a feint. Knyphausen was drawn up about a mile from the Point in the interior. Dr. Harrison thinks overcaution on the part of Washington made him fail to capture Knyphausen. Dr. Harrison has had pointed out to him the place where Randall was wounded. It is a little out of Elizabethtown. His company, of which Dr. Harrison's father, St George Talbot Harrison was one (a private) was engaged in harassing the enemy's rear. A British officer made himself peculiarly conspicuous. Capt Randolph asked for and obtained a musket from one of his men, saying 'I will not see that fellow parading so.' He stepped forward and raised his gun to fire. Dr. Harrison's impression is that while in the very act of raising his piece, he was struck in the

breast by a musket ball. Turning to his lieutenant Asher Randolph, whose son is Stewart Randolph, coal dealer in New York (his brother or cousin who succeeded him in the command) he said 'I am a dead man.' He was taken by Asher behind a barn a little in the rear, where some of his men had already taken shelter, and thence to Woodbridge, where he died within a day or two. His stone is standing in the yard at Woodbridge, adorned with military emblems. Randolph was described as the beau-ideal of a hero. Dr. Harrison saw in his boyhood, Randolph's brother [cousin] Asher. This latter was one of the finest looking military men Dr. Harrison ever saw. He had a very commanding appearance, a peremptory manner, and great austerity, very like De Witt Clinton. He was remarkable for brevity of speech and laconic answers. From what he has heard, Dr. Harrison thinks that Nathaniel must have been very like his brother. He has heard the story of the Americans keeping a man on the steeple at Perth Amboy looking with a spy glass after Billopp. Dr. Harrison's father once pointed out to him a house in Woodrow, then the best there, from which Captain Randolph had carried off several British officers. Dr. Harrison's father was along with the Captain. He said to the Doctor as he pointed out the house, "I don't know that I ever killed anybody, but I came as near shooting a man on the roof of that house as I could, and not do it." Capt. Randolph had intelligence of the officers being quartered there. Col. Billopp may or may not have been one of them. Randolph's men surrounded the house. Those he had confidence in were stationed at the doors. Mr. Harrison was one of these latter and was posted at the rear of the house. The officers had intelligence of their proximity and Mr. Harrison saw one pass out of the dormer window and take shelter behind it. Mr. Harrison called to Randolph, 'Captain, here's a man on the roof.' 'Shoot him, shoot him!' exclaimed the Captain. Mr. Harrison raised his gun, but being a humane man, thought he would call first to the officer to go back on peril of his life if he staid, which he did, and the officer went back. Capt. Randolph was married, but Dr. Harrison thinks he left no sons. He had one or two daughters. His widow married a Mr. Coddington. These were the parents of J. I. Coddington, former Post-Master."

On the same day of the interview Dr. Harrison wrote a letter to Charles E. Anthon from which we quote :

Northfield, Staten Island, Feb. 21, 1852

Dear Sir :

In the somewhat hurried conversation had with you this morning I may not have been as strictly accurate in relating the traditions heard in my boyhood as I could wish, as the call upon my recollection was unexpected and found me of course unprepared. I will therefore trouble you with a few lines in the way of correction etc. Capn. Nathaniel Fitz-Randolph, or Capn Nat Randall, as he was familiarly called fell at Elizabeth Town in the way I described. He with his company having advanced very near the enemy, and finding their situation a very exposed one, he, with the whole or a portion of it took refuge behind the barn alluded to. The officer whose conduct excited his dislike, had probably approached them to ascertain their number and position etc; he took the musket therefore from the hands of one of his men, to stop this insolence, and stepped out beyond the end of the building to shoot him, and this in opposition to the strong remonstrances of his Lieutenant, Asher Fitz-Randolph, and others near him. The moment he showed himself in open view he seems to have been fired on, for he had but just raised the gun to his face when he received the wound which I think was in his breast. In falling he was caught in the arms of his Lieut. Asher F. Randolph and uttered the exclamation "Asher, I am a dead man," and expressed no regret except "that he should not live to see the end of the contest."

I did not in our conversation, quite do justice to the character of Capn. Nathaniel. He seems to have been as generous and humane as he was chivalrous and brave, for I have often heard my father talk over his exploits, and mention incidents which displayed all these qualities conspicuously. Such as that in his night incursions upon the Island (which were not infrequent) he would never permit any of his officers or men to expose themselves to the danger of surprising and capturing a sentry of the enemy for he disdained the act of killing them on their post—but that he would halt his command in a suitable place, and then, alone, or sometimes with his Lieut. A. F. Randolph at a distance

behind him, he would stealthily approach the sentry on his hands and feet, or creeping up behind a bush, or some other object, he would suddenly spring upon him, and clasping him in his powerful arms, with whispered threats of immediate death if he resisted he would carry him back in triumph to his men who would express their wonder and astonishment at his success. These great qualities made him deservedly the Hero and Idol of that part of the frontier, and the terror of his name was widely diffused within the British lines.

.
With sentiments of respect

I am sir Your obt Servant,

J. T. Harrison.

On April 22^d 1852, Anthon had a conversation with Mr. Stuart F. Randolph, a son of Capt. Asher Fitz Randolph, and states that the story of the officer making himself conspicuous was new to Mr. Randolph. "His account was that Capt. Nat. Randolph stepped forward to capture a man and was shot, as he thinks, by the man himself." Mr. Charles Gilman of Woodbridge related it thus: "Nathaniel and his party were pursuing a party of British. One of the latter straggled behind, and Nat. Fitz Randolph might have shot him, but wished to take him prisoner. As Capt. Fitz Randolph was getting over a fence, the man turned round and shot him."

Anthon had a second conversation with Mr. Stuart F. Randolph June 1, 1852, who told him some details derived from a conversation with Capt. Nathaniel Fitz Randolph's daughter, then on a visit to New York. Asher and Nathaniel were first cousins. Capt. Nathaniel was wounded four times and imprisoned twice, the first time for 15 months, the second time for 16 months. He was killed by Knyphausen's party near Elizabethtown. "On one of the two occasions mentioned above Nathaniel was taken prisoner near Metuchen in the neighborhood of Brunswick by a party of four. He was cruelly treated by them and severely wounded in the head by a sword. An officer was among them and said: 'You will not succeed in gaining your independence and will lose many valuable lives in the attempt. The best thing you can do therefore is to join us and I can promise you

a far better position in our ranks than what you now hold.' He replied, 'The King is not rich enough to buy me.' One of his sisters married Col. Dissosway, another Mr. David Coddington.'

In *Anthon's Notes* there is the following reference to Mrs. Ellet's *Women of the American Revolution*, 1848, vol. 2, p. 289: British officers quartered at the house of Mrs. Dissosway, opposite Amboy. "Her husband was a prisoner." Captain Nat. Randolph, "her brother." A tory colonel once promised Mrs. Dissosway to procure the release of her husband, on condition of her prevailing upon her brother to stay quietly at home. "And if I could," she replied with a look of scorn, and drawing up her tall figure to its utmost height, "if I could act so dastardly a part, think you that General Washington has but one Captain Randolph in his army?"

Dally states in his *Woodbridge and Vicinity*, p. 251, that "One of the most conspicuous men for dash and daring who lived in Woodbridge during the stormy times, was Capt. Nathaniel Fitz Randolph." He was certainly active and bold and intelligent. It was while town clerk from 1769-1774, that he copied the old Town Book of Woodbridge into a new book, which the writer of this narrative has recently examined with much interest. It is done very neatly, and is said to be an accurate copy of the original.

"He was active, bold and intelligent" says Mr Dunlap in a letter to Whitehead, "and had a contrast in a brother, Ezekiel, a butcher, who was dull, forgetful and sleepy, remarkable for leaving to his horse the guidance of his butchers cart."

In the *Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War*, by William S. Stryker, 1872, there is this notice: Randolph, Nathaniel Fitz. Captain, Middlesex; elected naval officer, Eastern District, New Jersey, December 12th, 1778; sword ordered by Council, December 11th, 1778, to be presented to him for his patriotism, vigilance and bravery during the war; taken from his bed by tories January [February], 1779, and imprisoned in New York; exchanged May 26th, 1780; died at Woodbridge, New Jersey, July [June?] 23d, 1780, of wounds received in action.

Capt. Fitz Randolph's family is said to have come from Barnstable, Mass., and to have settled at Woodbridge about 1669-1670.

Believing that Staten Islanders should know more about this brave Captain Fitz Randolph, who as has been seen, often came to our Island on expeditions during the Revolution, we have thought it well to present these few facts, especially those relating to the capture of Colonel Billopp.

All of the Fitz Randolphs were by no means dead with the passing of the brave Nathaniel, nor had they given up their habit of visiting Staten Island, as the following taken from the newspapers of the time will show.

Trenton, September 6

Friday night the 25th ult. a party of our six months men, under the command of Ensign Fitz-Randolph, went upon Staten Island and brought off a Justice Lake and five other principal inhabitants, without any loss on our side.—*New Jersey Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1780 (*N. J. Archives*, 2nd Series, vol. IV, p. 623).

Trenton, September 27

On Tuesday night the 19th inst. Ensign Fitz Randolph with eight men of the state regiment, visited Staten Island from Woodbridge, and surprised a picquet of fourteen New-Levies, but took only four prisoners, as the remainder of the nimble-footed guard trusted rather to their heels than their firelocks for safety.—*New Jersey Gazette*, September 27, 1780 (*N. J. Archives* 2nd Series, vol. IV p. 665).

Trenton, January 17

Last week Ensign Fitz-Randolph, with ten or twelve privates of our militia, were surprised in Amboy by a party of the enemy, and carried to Staten Island.—*New Jersey Gazette*, January 17, 1781 (*N. J. Archives*, 2nd Series, vol. V. p. 178).

Trenton, August 29

We hear that last Thursday night a party in six whale-boats, consisting of 70 men, under the command of Lieut. Asher Fitz-Randolph, of the state regiment, stationed at Woodbridge, landed on Staten-Island,—and proceeded as far as Fort Richmond, in which were stationed upwards of 200 tories and refugees. A severe firing commenced about daybreak, and continued until 11 o'clock. All that ventured out of the fort were either killed or taken, and Lieutenant Fitz-Randolph brought off several prison-

ers and nine British horses, without any loss except having three men slightly wounded, and Captain Story, who commanded one of the whale-boats, was wounded in three different places, but none of them mortal.—*New Jersey Gazette*, Aug. 29, 1781 (*N. J. Archives*, 2nd Series, vol. V. p. 288).

Dally states (p. 264) that "Capt. Asher Fitz Randolph lived at or near the old Blazing Star. He did effective service with his excellent company during the war. At the age of 62 years he died, April 16th, 1817, and was buried in the Woodbridge Presbyterian grave-yard."

We may add that his grave stone is still standing, and that we have recently photographed it and the brown sandstone one by its side to the memory of his wife, Catherine.

In Stryker's *Official Register* there is this notice: Randolph, Asher Fitz. Ensign, Captain Freeman's company, State troops; Lieutenant, ditto; Captain, Major Hayes' battalion, ditto; Captain, Middlesex.

The following letter will show Billopp's importance on the Island at the time of the Revolution. It is copied from vol. 2 of the *Transcript of various Papers relating to the Losses, Services and Support of the American Loyalists and to His Majesty's Provincial Forces during the war of American Independence, preserved amongst the American Manuscripts in the Royal Institution of Great Britain*, London, 1777-1783.¹⁰

N. York 16th. March 1782

Sir

The Commander in Chief was pleasd to desire me to apoint Col^o Billop Superintendant of Staten Island, with a Salary of three hundred and fifty pound Currency.

I have had the honour to Acquaint His Excellency that Col^o Billop has applyd for a years Salary due the 26th of last month, and it is by the Commander in Chief's direction that I signifye to you his wish that youl be so good to pay to Col^o Billop three hundred and fifty pounds Currency.

I am

Sir

your most ob^t humble Servant

James Robertson.

¹⁰ From copy in the *N. Y. Public Library*.

This letter is addressed to Captain Smith Secretary to the Commander in Chief, and is endorsed "His Excellency Governor Robertson, Notification, That Colonel Billop be allowed £ 350 N. Y. Currency p^r Annum from the 26th. February 1781—as Superintendent of Staten Island by Order of the Commander in Chief.

16th. March 1782

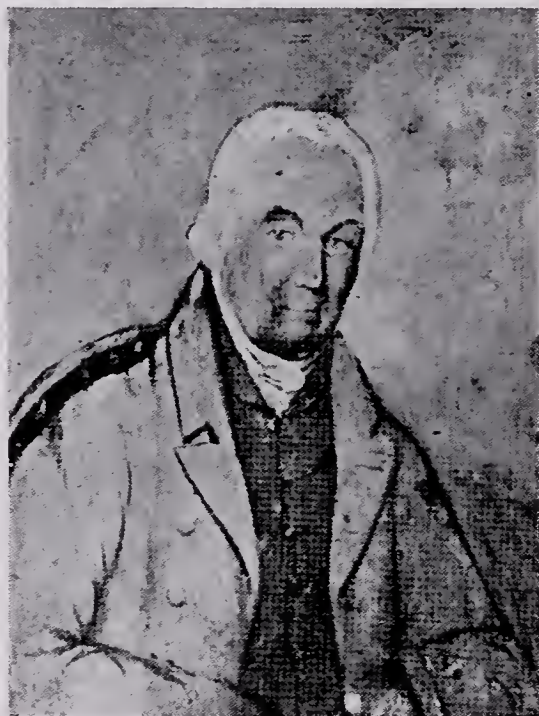
Isaac Simonson in a conversation with Anthon, January 17, 1852: "The inhabitants commonly worked on the roads on Saturdays. One very warm day, he supposes in June, he was working in company with others, on the road that runs down from the Four Corners to the North Side, a little below Martlings, when Col. Billop and Col. Seaman came along on horseback. They stopped and talked half an hour with the road-master, and gave something to the men as was customary, who, he recollects were dissatisfied with the smallness of the gift. He remembers particularly that they had linen gloves on, and their hands being sweaty, it took them some time to pull them off. . . . The Ferry to Amboy was on Billop's farm. Scows used to cross there. . . . John and Peter Lattourette lived at Fresh Kill. They were great patriots, and when the British came they went to Jersey; they afterwards used to come over with whale-boats to Staten Island."

Peter Wandel in a conversation with Anthon, August 25, 1852, stated that Billopp pretty much governed the Island during the war. He was accounted very clever, and was a large, stout and noble looking man.

Morris's History, vol. 1, p. 140, records the following as furnished by a friend: "Christopher Billopp was a very tall, soldierly looking man, when in his prime. He was exceedingly proud, and his pride at times led him to the verge of haughtiness. Yet he was kind-hearted, not only to those whom he considered his equals, but to his slaves, as well as to the poor people of the Island. No one went from his door at the old manor hungry. It was his custom to gather the people of the Island once a year on the lawn in front of his house and hold a 'harvest home.' He delighted to talk to them and offer advice for their welfare. He was popular with the people. He was fond of dress and was scrupulously neat in his attire. He kept his coach and liveried driver and footmen. Passionately fond of his horses his stable

was filled with the finest-bred animals in the land. He was a magnificent rider and was very fond of the saddle. He was an expert shot with a pistol, which once saved his life, when he was attacked by robbers. Christopher Billopp was not a man to take advice, unless it instantly met with his favor. He generally regarded his own opinion superior to that of others, especially if theirs did not accord with his own."

Clute gives the following from among the old records of the county: "October the 30: 1781 to Bedell & Mischeau, for Powder delivered by Clonell Bilops order when the Island was invaded,"



LIEUT.-COLONEL CHRISTOPHER BILLOPP

After Morris

and adds: "The firm of Bedell & Mischeau probably were the proprietors of the store kept at Fresh Kills during the war."

Colonel Billopp's estate, Bentley Manor, and that of his father-in-law, Benjamin Seaman, were confiscated. On July 16, 1784, Isaac Stoutenburgh and Philip Van Cortland, commissioners of forfeitures for the southern district of New York, sold Bentley Manor to Thomas McFarren of the City of New York, Merchant, for 4.695 pounds lawful money of the said state (*Deeds, Liber E.* pp. 146-147). Eight hundred and fifty acres and half an acre of the original Manor were covered by the sale, and were at the time in the possession of nine persons to whom Billopp

had deeded the property before his departure for Canada. On May 1, 1781, he had sold the Manor house and 373 acres to Samuel Ward for £3.730 (Deeds, *Liber E.* pp. 132–133).

Isaac Stoutenburgh and Philip Van Cortland found the land in possession of the following persons:

Samuel Ward	373	acres	Joseph Totten	231½	acres
Albert Ryckman	200	“	Jacob Rickhow	111½	“
Benj Drake	67½	“	Jas Churchward	25	“
Edw. Wood	50	“	Andrew Prior	50	“
John Manner	50	“	Total	850½	“

Col. Billopp in his claim before the Commissioners in London, given near the end of this chapter, stated that he had sold 850 acres of his land before he left the Island, and the deeds to Totten dated May 10, 1780, to Drake dated May 29, 1780, and to Ward dated May 1, 1781, are recorded in Richmond Co. Deeds, *Liber E.* in 1788; the first two on the 6 day of August, and the one to Ward on August 10. They are also referred to in *Antho'n's Notes*. As will be seen by comparing the two lists, some of the land had changed owners before the Commissioners made up their list of those in possession. They had the following recorded in *Liber E of Deeds*, pp. 146–147: “Recorded at the request of Isaac Stoutenburgh and Philip Van Cortland Commissioners of Forfeitures for the southern District the following Instruments of writing this 25 Day of May 1789. Joseph Egbert Clerk.” Then follow the records of the sale of the lands of Paul Micheau to Cornelius C. Roosevelt on April 30, 1785; of Benjamin Seaman's land on July 16, 1784, and the sale of the 850½ acres mentioned above, in the possession of nine persons, to Thomas McFarren on July 16, 1784. However, the Manor of Bentley, by subsequent agreement, remained in the possession of the Ward family. (See Appendix.)

Colonel Billopp lost a great deal of property by reason of the war, not only his estate and home, but he was also plundered by the Hessians of the British army, as well as by the Americans, who carried off much of his movable property as also appears in his Memorial and statements before the Commissioners in London to be found on a succeeding page.

About the close of the war Billopp removed to Canada with all of his family except his two sons Thomas and John, who later were in business in New York City.

Of interest at this point is the will of James Poillon of Richmond County, dated February 6, 1778; proved July 27, 1783, an abstract of which is to be found in the *Collections, N. Y. Hist. Soc.*, 1903, p. 61:

Codicil. March 24, 1783. "Whereas, I appointed Christopher Billopp, Esquire, Richard Seaman, and my brother, John Poillon, executors of my last will, and as two of them, Esquire Billopp and Seaman, have lately removed to the City of New York, it may not be convenient for them to assist in settling my estate, I make other two executors, namely: John Journeay, and my nephew, James Guion, both of the County of Richmond, executors, to act with the three others."

In Lorenzo Sabine's "*Biographical Sketch of Loyalists of the American Revolution*" is the following notice of Christopher Billopp:

"In 1783 he was one of the fifty-five petitioners for lands in Nova Scotia. . . . These petitioners were, and still are known as the 'Fifty-Five.' They represented that their position in society had been very respectable, and that previous to the Revolution they had possessed much influence. They stated that they intended to remove to Nova Scotia, and desired that the same number of acres that were granted to field-officers of the army might be given to each of them. And they asked that, if possible, the lands should be conveyed free from quit-rents, and from other incumbrances. This petition created much clamor at New York, and a copy of it having been sent to St. John, and printed, created an excitement there. . . . He went to New Brunswick soon after, and for many years bore a prominent part in the administration of its affairs. He was a member of the House of Assembly, and of the Council, and on the death of Governor Smythe, in 1823, he claimed the Presidency of the Government, and issued his proclamation accordingly; but the Honorable Ward Chipman was a competitor for the station, and was sworn into office. Colonel Billopp died at St. John in 1827, aged ninety. His second wife Jane having died at that city in 1802, aged forty-eight."

As Colonel Billopp in his Memorial and statements before the Commissioners in London, in 1783 and 1784, gave much interesting information about the war and the Manor of Bentley, the papers are here presented, being taken from the copy in the New York Public Library. The Calendar, as transcribed for the N. Y. Public Library in 1903, is first given, and then follows the Examinations of Billopp in London.

American Loyalists. Calendar of the original Memorials, Vouchers and other Papers deposited with the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists held under the Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III. preserved amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790. In six volumes, volume 5.

Vol. V. pp. 451-455

North Carolina [Bundle] 117

Billopp Christopher

39 ^aA/c of things plundered from Claimant by the Rebels

^bAn Estimate of the value of Claimant's Lands in the Manor of Bentley, on Staten Island (exclusive of the light sandy lands on the North side of the road leading through said Estate in New York).

Three copies of ^aa/c of things plundered from Claimant.

Estimate of value of Bentley Lands (3 copies).

A/c with Government.

A/c headed "The Several accounts of Mr. Billopp's losses reduced to Sterling, agreeable to the par of exchange between New York Currency, and the former, reconing Guineas at 39/4 Currency, 21) Sterling" 8 February 1784.

List of nine names, (the first being Samuel Wood) [Ward] with number of acres and value of the same.

Claimant's Appointment by William Tryon, as Colonel of the Richmond County Militia 18 November 1772; Sealed Certificate by Thomas Lawton that foregoing is a true copy 22 June 1787. (Mutilated).

General Skinner's Orders to Claimant 15 Oct^r 1777.

James Campbell's Orders to Claimant 15 Nov^r 1777 and 16 November 1777.

Declaration of John Campbell *re* his proposals to Col. Billop 6 January 1778. Addressed "To the Militia and other Inhabitants of Staten Island."

Letter from B. C. Payne to Claimant, stating that he will call upon him for military [453] assistance and advice n. d.

Letter from George Stewart to Claimant *re* military matters 13 June [].

D°. from J. Dumaresq to Claimant with Gen^e Sterling's Orders n. d. (On scrap of paper).

Note from B. C. Payne to Claimant, saying that he wishes to see him, as he has very particular Orders from Lord Cornwallis to deliver to him. n. d.

D°. from Thomas Murray to Claimant, stating that Gen^e. Robinson desires to see him on business. n. d.

Letter from Frederick Mackenzie to Claimant with General Knyphausen's Orders [torn away].

D°. from Stephen Skinner to Claimant with Commander in Chief's Orders, 6 Jan. 1777 (mutilated).

D°. from Col. Lossberg to Claimant with orders 28 August 1776.

D°. from William Shirreff to Claimant of January 1777.

D°. from Cortland Skinner to Claimant with orders 9 January 1777 (Sealed).

D°. from B. C. Bayne 11 January 1777.

D°. *re* fuel for the garrison 20 January 1777.

D°. stating that General Vaughan wishes him to enquire into the charges made by ferrymen employed by Government on Staten Island 24 January 1777 (Sealed).

[454] Letter from Henry Bruen to Claimant, with Orders from the Commander in Chief 10 June 1777.

D°. from James Campbell to Claimant with General Campbell's Orders 26 Sept. 1777.

D°. from Cortland Skinner to Claim^t 30 Oct. 1777.

D°. from John Campbell to Claimant with Sir Henry Clinton's Orders 1 November 1777.

D°. from Major James Campbell to Claimant with General Campbell's Orders, 19 Nov^r. 1777.

D°. 4 December 1777.

D°. 5 March 1778.

D°. from James Campbell to Claimant with General Campbell's Orders, 27 March 1778; A/c for nut wood &c; A/c of Cash received of John Storer.

D°. from General Leslie to Claimant 2 May 1779.

D°. from Cortland Skinner " " 9 Feb. 1780.

D°. from Thomas Stirling " " 6 June 1780.

D°. from J. Gunning " " 12 June 1780.

D°. from Cortland Skinner " " 20 June 1780.

D°. from " " " " 13 Aug^t 1780.

D^t. from Charles Handfield " " 6 Sept. 1780.

D°. from J. Losack " " with Gen^e. Paterson's

Orders 18 February 1781.

D°. 22 April 1781.

D°. 25 April 1781.

D°. from W. Wynyard to Claimant with Gen^e. [455] Skinner's Orders 31 July 1781.

Letter from Cortland Skinner to Claimant 18 Aug.^t 1781.

Letter from Cortland Skinner to Claimant 19 Aug.^t 1781 (Sealed).

Letter from Claimant to the Comm^{rs} 14 Nov^r. 1783 (Sealed).

Note from Charles Cooke to M^r. Lee 4 March 1788 (in third person).

Vol. V. p. 5.

Bundle 100 marked Various.

Billop or Billopp Christopher (New York)

39 Certificate by William Tryon 9 Feb. 1784.

Letters from W. Tryon to Col. Billop with Orders respecting his Regiment of Militia etc. 13 August 1776.

Letter from W. Tryon to Col. Billopp, thanking him for his lists of horses, wagons and drivers 18 Aug. 1776.

American Loyalists. Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George iii, preserved amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England. 1783-1790, Volume 41.

Examinations in London. Memorials, Schedules of Losses, and Evidences New York Claimants in books (Book i). Transcribed for the New York Public Library in 1900

To the Commissioners
appointed by Act of Parliament to enquire into the Losses and
Services of the American Loyalists.

The Memorial of Christopher Billopp of Staten Island
Sheweth

That your Memorialist was one of the Representatives in the
General Assembly of New York for said Island, and evinced his
Attachment to the British Constitution during the long Struggle
which took place previous to the Civil War.

That being possessed of an Estate at the West End of the
Island and having the Command of the Militia as their Colonel,
led them in person (except while a prisoner) on every Alarm in
the course of the War and had the charge of the advanced posts
along the Sound a line of fifteen Miles the greater part of the
time, he also assisted in the Construction of several redoubts on
the said Island with his regiment who was employed between two
and three Months, and at different periods procured several
hundred Men to drive Waggons and Artillery for the Army, as
likewise many Horses and Waggons for their Service, and as-
sisted in procuring Forage, Fuel &c for them, for all which Serv-
ices your Memorialist received no Pay or Compensation.

That your Memorialist has been twice taken and Imprisoned,
once Ironed and chained to the Floor of a common Gaol at Burl-
ington New Jersey, and allowed no other Sustenance than Bread
and Water, for his Attachment to Government.

That after being plundered to the Amount of several hundred
pounds at different times between the Years 1776 and 1780 the
severe Frost at last gave the Rebels an easy access to his Farm
on the Ice when they carried off a Negro, his Cattle, Horses,
Carriages, Bedding and other Furniture to a large Amount (he
thinks a return was made by the Magistrates to Major General
Thomas Sterling who then commanded, of the value taken at
that time from him, by the General's desire, and that it
amounted to £944.) and compelled him to move his Family from
so exposed a situation, his Losses also from the British Army &
Sailors amounted to £1441.16—The Losses from the Incursions
of the Enemy £1500—and his expenditures owing to his being
obliged to live so many Years from his Family and in the Serv-
ice of Government with the extraordinary Expence of this Fam-

ily by the removal of them from his Estate as near as he can estimate to £1500. He was attained by the state of New York in 1779 and his Estate forfeited which induced him towards the close of the War to part with his Lands for what they would fetch subject as they were to Seizure in Case of an unfavourable issue, his Loss by this Sale he estimates at £4752—& the whole being New York Currency reduced to Sterling amount to about 5000.

In support of these facts your Memorialist begs leave to refer first to the several Documents and papers given in with this Memorial, and also to the Gentlemen whose Names are hereto annexed for his Character Conduct &c.

Your Memorialist therefore prays that his Case may be taken into your consideration in order that your Memorialist may be enabled under your Report to receive such Aid and Relief as his Losses and Services may be found to deserve.

Christo^r. Billopp

25 Sept. 1783.

Feb: 9, 1784

Evidence on the foregoing Memorial of
Christopher Billopp
Gen^l Tho^s Stirling—Sworn

Says he commanded in Staten Island—He knew Claimant in 1776 and 1777 when he was Colonel of the Militia. He served under Witness in 1779 and 1780 and was very active and did his duty upon every occasion & was alert in the execution of Orders. Says during his Command at Staten Island L^d Stirling a Rebel General invaded the Island, and on that occasion he knows Claimant lost a part of his property. Witness has a return of the Loss sustained on the Island made by the Magistrates and believes it might amount to between 600 and £900. New York Currency—Says Claimant was reputed a Man of considerable property on the Island. Says when things were going unfavorably for us Claimant express^d. himself that he would take £3000 New York Currency for his Farm which he said was not the half of its worth

Claimant Sworn

Says he was born on Staten Island. When the Troubles broke out he resided on his own Estate in Staten Island. He was a

member of the General Assembly of New York, and in that Assembly opposed every measure brought forward there in favor of the Congress. He took a great deal of pains to prevent the County he represented from joining their Measures and succeeded. When it was proposed in 1775 to the People in general to send Delegates to Congress (the Assembly having previously refused to do so) Claimant attended the County Meeting and there also carried the point by a great Majority against the designs of Congress.

The first Act he did after the Lexington Affair was, joining in a Letter to General Gage requesting him not at that time to send any Troops into the Province of New York, hoping the Flame would blow over. He exerted himself with Success in keeping the Inhabitants of the Island quiet till the Arrival of the British Troops under General Howe in the Spring of 1776 and after the General's Arrival did every Thing to assist him which lay in his power. Claimant was Colonel of Militia of his County before the Rebellion, and continued such during the course of it.

Produces an American Newspaper mentioning the Spirited Conduct of Claimant in an Action on Staten Island on the 22^d August 1777—

Says this was the only general Action he was in, but has been in frequent skirmishes, and never asked for or received any pay.

General James Robertson, Sworn.

Says he knew Colonel Billopp in America. Says he was a Member of the Assembly at New York and did every thing in his power to prevent Rebellion. When the Rebels landed in force on Staten Island where his Estate lay, he put himself at the Head of our Troops, and by his Sprit and knowledge of the Country was very useful in driving them off. Sometime after he fell into their Hands, and they imprisoned him, put him in Irons, chained him to the floor, and used him very cruelly. Says when he (Witness) came to be Governor they were without any Law or Civil Magistrates, he appointed Claimant to act as a Judge on Staten Island where he acted with good uprightness—He has a large Family—he is a very good Man, and he quitted a very considerable property. He can't speak particularly to his property, but he had a very good Estate, and it suffered considerably by the Rebels—and a great deal by the English Troops.

Claimant again

Says he was imprisoned by the Rebels for about 7 or 8 Weeks in Irons, chained to the Floor, hand and foot, and Kept upon Bread and Water. He was prisoner for about Seven Months, but closely confined only that time. During his Imprisonment they made him great offers. Gen Washington sent him a Message informing him that if he wo^d. resign his Command of the Militia in the British Service he should be permitt^d. to go home and not be molested in his person or property during the War, or after it. This he refused.

Property. Says at the Commencement of the Rebellion he was possessed of an Estate in Staten Island amounting to 1078 Acres, with a good House upon it built by his Grandfather. About one half of the Estate was cultivated. There were besides his own Dwelling house, four Houses upon the Estate, which were rented out.

Says before the War he would not have taken less than £13,500 New York Currency if he had wished to have sold it, and thinks it was worth it.

Produces his Title Deeds to this Land viz^t.

6th June 1687. Grant from Thomas Dongan Esquire Governor of the province of New York to Captain Christopher Billop of a Tract of Land containing 1600 Acres known by the name of Bentley in the County of Richmond in Staten Island.

25th April 1724. Will of said Christopher Billop whereby he devises (inter alia) the said Estate to his Grandson Thomas Farmer intail male on condition of taking the name of Billop.

24th April 17th. Geo. 2^d [1744] Exemption of a recovery whereby said Thomas Billop docks the Intail.

5th Oct. 1749. Will of said Thomas Billop whereby he devises a part of this Estate called Bentley (as described in the Will) to Claimant in fee.

Says the part which was devised to him by the above Will was the 1078 Acres for which he lodges his Claim, together with a small piece about 30 Acres which he sold.

The first Injury done to the Estate was by the Hessian Troops in 1776, and he afterwards sustained a Loss by the King's Army and the Sailors.

Produces a Schedule marked G. and signed by himself which he says is a fair Account of the Loss he sustained from this Cause

Amount^g. to £1441.16 New York Currency.

Says many of the articles are charged higher from the Circumstance of their bearing a higher price owing to the War, than they bore before it. He has charged the prices which were Current at the time.

Hay in 1772 would have been worth 4/p Ct w^t, Wood 24/p Cord Oats about 2^s/

Says after he was attained in 1780 or 1781, he sold this Estate to the foll^g 9 persons viz^t.

Samuel Wood [Ward]	373	Acres	£3730
Albert Rickman	207	d ^o	2070
Benj ⁿ Drake	60	d ^o	600
Edm ^d Wood	50	D ^o	500
John Mance [Manee]	50	d ^o	500
Jo ^s & Ja ^s Totten	35	d ^o	350
Ja ^s Churchward	25	d ^o	150
Ch ^s Storee	50	d ^o	500
Acres	850		£8200 ¹¹

He sold that part of it for the Loss upon which he claims for 8.200 Currenc^y. The purchasers took the chance of the War. He sold them only because of the Attainder. And by selling them he lost, as he conceives, £4752.

Personal property. States a Loss amounting to £1500 Currency by Expenses occasion^d by the War.

Produces a Schedule marked A, and signed by himself Amounting to £1.500, 2^s N. York Currency which he says contains an Account of different Articles plundered from him by the Rebels at different times. Admits that many of these Articles like those in the former Inventory are charged at the prices they bore during the Rebellion.

Produces Certificate from General Tryon and Letter from Colonel Simcoe testifying his Loyalty and Services.

Brigadier Gen^e. Cortland Skinner. Sworn.

Knew Claimant in America from his Infancy. Says he always was loyal and took a very early and decided part in favor of the

¹¹ Adds £8400.

British Government both in a Civil and Military Capacity. Says on General Sullivan attacking the Island on the 22^d Aug.^t 1777 Claim^t. joined with a party during the Action which took place, and acted with great Spirit, he was twice taken prisoner and very ill used.

Knew his Estate, part of it was very good and a good House upon it. Supposing it to be a 1000 Acres with a good House upon it and half of it was cultivated. Thinks it might be worth from 7 to £10,000 New York Currency. Thinks the Southern part was worth £10 an Acre. The Northern part was lighter Land, and a part was only valuable on account of a Ferry—£10 an Acre is the highest price he would put upon the best Land, and believes the greater part of the Estate would come under this description. Supposing the good Land to be 800 Acres should value the Estate at £10. an acre includ^g. the House and Buildings.

Knows Claimant was plundered by the Hessian Troops and the Rebels but can't say particularly what the Loss amount^d. to.

Has heard Claimant sold the Lands in 1780 or 1781, but never heard the Amount for which they were sold.

Says the price of fresh Hay was about £6 a Ton in 1777. Indian Corn 8 or 10/ a Bushel, and all other Articles of Grain in proportion. This was the price settled by the General, and was an exceeding high price, too high, and more than the people expected. The price before the War was infinitely lower.

Claimant again

Says his Estate is confiscated his Name is down in the Confiscation Act of 1779. He has seen it down in the Act. There was no Mortgage or Incumbrance upon his property and he did not owe 20 Shillings when he left America

Ex^d v B. B.

Volume 5, p. 466.

Examinations and Decisions on Fresh Claims for Temporary Support. December 1782 to 1790. In five books (Book ii)

Billopp Christopher Esq^r Staten Island, born in America. 22^d. Dec^r. 1783.

He was a Member of the General Assembly of New York in 1775 & Col^o of Militia during the War—was one of the first members in the Assembly who opposed the Measures of Congress—

in Consequence of which he was obnoxious to the Americans—had 1078 Acres of Land in Staten Island—850 Acres of this Land he valued at £15. an Acre, they were as good Lands as any in America & in high Cultivation—he is attained & banished & his Lands confiscated in Consequence of his Loyalty & Attachment to Great Britain—his memorial States many military Services entirely at his own Expense & for which he has received no pay—he was twice taken Prisoner & put in Irons & otherwise ill used in Consequence of his Exertions in support of the British Government.—he arrived in England 23 April last, and having sold his Estate for £8.000 Currency of New York in 1781 & 1782 has been at considerable Expence in supporting his family & has now only £5000 left—he has a Wife and seven Children two of whom are in England—his Wife & five daughters are in America—he thinks he lost more than £5000 by being obliged to sell his Estate at that time—Col^o Billop's Intention is to go to Nova Scotia—

Col^o Billop held the Office of Police at Staten Island the Salary was £350 Currency to which he was appointed in 1781 by Gen^e. Robinson (this Office was occasioned by the War & given him to help support him & his family) Col^o. Billop refers for the proof of his Loyalty & Services to a Certificate from General Robinson left with his memorial at Lincoln's Inn fields.

No further Certificates or Attendance necessary, Col^o Billop being well known to Col^o Dundas.

Decision £ 80 p Ann.

This Gentleman appears to have taken not only a very early, but decided part in favor of this Country, & to have rendered many Services in his Military Capacity at his own Expence without receiving any pay—his Loss of property & Loyal Conduct in behalf of Great Britain justly entitle him to the Attention of Government, & we therefore think that an annual Allowance of £80. to commence from Michaelmas 1783 will not be considered too much; at the same time we think it necessary to say that on his going to Nova Scotia we mean the said Allowance shall cease.

Volume II, p. 88.

Summary of the Proceedings of the Commissioners being their several Reports and Statements, with the Names of Claimants,

Amount of Claims, and Particulars of Liquidation, 1784 to 1789
Transcribed for the N. Y. Public Library 1898

No of Certif. 64

Name of Claimant Christopher Billop

Province New York

Claim for loss of Property 5171.10

Sum originally allowed ———

Sum as allowed on Revision 400

Total Sum payable under Act of Parl^t 400

Colonel Billopp died at St John in 1827, his second wife Jane having died at that city in 1802, aged forty eight. In the *Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences* there is a photograph received from D. Wallace MacDonald of Col. Billopp's gravestone from which the following is copied:

From churchyard in St. John, New Brunswick.

Sacred | to | the memory of | the Honorable | Christopher Billopp | A member of His Majesty's | council in this province, whose | uncompromising loyalty and | distinguished exertions as | a Lieut. Colonel, in the Royal | cause during the American | rebellion, obliged him at the | termination of that contest, to | abandon without compensation | his hereditary property on Staten | Island, and retire with his family | to this Colony, wherein he has since | resided universally respected. |

He died on the 28th. day of March | 1827, in the 90th. year | of his age. |

The following is from the Proceedings of the Natural Science Association of Staten Island, September 11th, 1897: Mr. Ira K. Morris exhibited an oil portrait of Christopher Billopp, made in 1820, and loaned by Mrs. M. V. Paddock, of St. John, N. B., the great-granddaughter of Colonel Billopp. Mr. Morris also contributed the following:

I have often heard it repeated that Colonel Billopp died a poor, heart-broken man. It is not so. I have the original papers in my possession, kindly loaned me by his descendants in St. John and other parts of Canada, which tell me he was worth at least \$75,000; and that was a large sum of money for one man to own in the early years of the present century. The following is a verbatim copy of Colonel Billopp's will:

“In the name of God, Amen. I Christopher Billopp, of the City of St. John, in the province of New Brunswick, (being, thank God, in good health and sound mind and memory), do make this my last will and testament in manner following: And, First, I order my just debts and funeral expenses may be paid as soon as possible.

“Item. I give to my daughters, Catherine, Jane, Ann and Mary, each and every one of them, two thousand pounds stock in the capital or joint stock of three per cent. annuities, erected by an act of Parliament of the twenty-fifth year of the reign of his Majesty King George the Second. And I likewise give to each of my daughters, above mentioned, six hundred pounds stock in the Navy five per cent. annuities transferable at the Bank of England.

“Item. I give to my daughter Louisa nine hundred and twelve pounds, ten shillings stock in the capital stock and funds of the Governor and company of the Bank of England. I also give my said daughter Louisa five hundred pounds stock in the five per cent. annuities last above mentioned, and I likewise give to my daughter Louisa fifty-four pounds stock in the five per cent. annuities, erected by an act of Parliament of the thirty-fourth year of the reign of His Majesty King George the Third.

“Item. I give to the four children of my late son, Thomas Billopp, *viz.*: Mary, Lawrence, Frances, John Moore and Thomas Farmar, five hundred pounds stock, in the five per cent. annuities first above mentioned, to be divided among them equally, share and share alike. I also give to my said grandson, Thomas Farmar, my family pictures that I left in New York.

“Item. I give to the four children of my daughter Sarah, *viz.*: Billopp, Edward, Jasper and Frances, each of them one hundred pounds stock in the five per cent. stock first above mentioned.

“Item. I give to the two daughters of my late daughter Frances, each of them one hundred pounds in the five per cent. annuities first above mentioned.

“Item. I give to William Billopp Robertson and his heirs and assigns forever, my two lots of land on the north side of King’s square, in the city of St. John, and province of New Brunswick, known as lots Nos. 318 and 319.

“Item. I give to my daughters, Ann and Mary, all my beds, bedsteads, bedding, with the curtains and furniture of the same, and the window curtains and all the sheeting and table linen, and all my books and every kind of household goods and furniture which may belong to me at the time of my death. And also my silver plate and plated ware to be equally divided between them. And also the kitchen furniture.

“Item. I give, devise and bequeath to my said daughters, Ann and Mary, and to their heirs and assigns forever, my lots of land on the north side of King’s street in the city of Saint John, aforesaid, known as lots Nos. 387 and 388, and the westernmost half of lot No. 386, with all the buildings and improvements thereon, the amount, when they shall sell the same, to be equally divided between them.

“Item. I give to my five daughters, the children of my late wife, Jane, all the remaining part and residue of my estate, to be equally divided among them, share and share alike. And it is my will that the stock herein given to my unmarried children may be transferred to them in their own names as soon after my decease as can be done.

“And lastly, I do hereby nominate, constitute and appoint my sons-in-law, the Honorable John Black, John Wallace, Esquire, and my friend, the Honorable John Robinson, Executors, and my daughters, Ann and Mary, Executrices, of this my last will and testament, with full power to do everything that is necessary to carry the same into full effect, hereby ratifying and confirming this, and cancelling and revoking all or any other will or wills made by me.

“In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty-ninth day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty.

“Signed, sealed, published and declared by the aforesaid Christopher Billopp, to be his last will and testament in the presence of us who have subscribed our names as witnesses thereto at his request, in his presence and in the presence of each other.

CHRISTO’R BILLOPP.

“Ralph M. Jarvis.

“James Kendricks.

“Hugh Johnston, Junior.

“Henry Blakslee.

“This is a Codicil to my last will and testament within written: Whereas, since the making of my said last will and testament the five per cent. annuities stock have been paid off and done away with, and in lieu thereof a new stock created bearing interest at four per cent., transferrable at the Bank of England. And whereas, all the five per cent. stocks of which I was possessed was transferred to the said four per cent. stocks; now, therefore, it is my wish and desire, and I do give and bequeath the said four per cent. stock annuities to the several persons to whom I have within given and bequeathed the said five per cent. stock to become vested and payable in the same proportions as the said five per cent. stock is in and by said will directed. I do cancel and annul the bequest made in my said will to my granddaughter, Frances, daughter of my daughter Frances; and I do give and bequeath the one hundred pounds stock which I intended for her to her sister, Mary E. Robertson, whereby Mary E. is now entitled to two hundred pounds stock.

“In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, the twenty-eighth day of November, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty-two.

CHRISTO’R BILLOPP.

“Signed, sealed and delivered by the said testator as and for a codicil to his last will and testament within written in my presence, who in his presence, and at his request have subscribed my name as witness hereto.

N. PARKER.”

It may be added in closing the account of Colonel Christopher Billopp, that there has been in the past much opposition among a certain class on our Island to preserving the Old Manor House because it was owned by a man opposed to the war of the Revolution. The fact that the Conference was held in the house is of course the chief reason for its preservation, and it has been shown that it was Benjamin Franklin who chose it as the meeting place. Owing to the brief space of time between September 8, when the choice was made, and September 11 when the meeting was held, on the morning of which day Lord Howe came down the bay from his ship, Billopp, who appears for good reasons not to have occupied the house at the time, may not have known that the

Conference was to take place. There was no reason why he should have been consulted. It is certain that Franklin did not consult him when he suggested that the Conference could be held in his house on Staten Island.

Further, Colonel Billopp and Judge Seaman were regarded with "suspicion" at the time, and not condemned as enemies of their country, as were some other Staten Islanders. As proof of this we find the following among the *Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795, 1801-1804*, Vol. V, p. 158.

"Under the act of the Provincial Congress, the following named persons were condemned as enemies to the cause and rights of America

.
In Richmond-county.—Isaac Decker, Abm. Harris, Ephm. Taylor, and Minne Burger.

.
"The following named persons 'who, by reason of their holding Offices from the King of Great Britain, from their having neglected or refused to associate with their fellow citizens,' have been considered by their countrymen in a suspicious light, whereby it hath become necessary as well for the safety as for the satisfaction of the people, who, in times so dangerous and critical, are naturally led to consider those as their enemies who withhold from them their aid and influence.

.
In Richmond-county.—Benjamin Seaman and Christopher Billop."

In the book on *Thomas and Anne Billopp Farmar*, to which we have frequently referred, there is further information concerning the children of Col. Christopher Billopp, after the family had removed from Staten Island.

CHAPTER VII

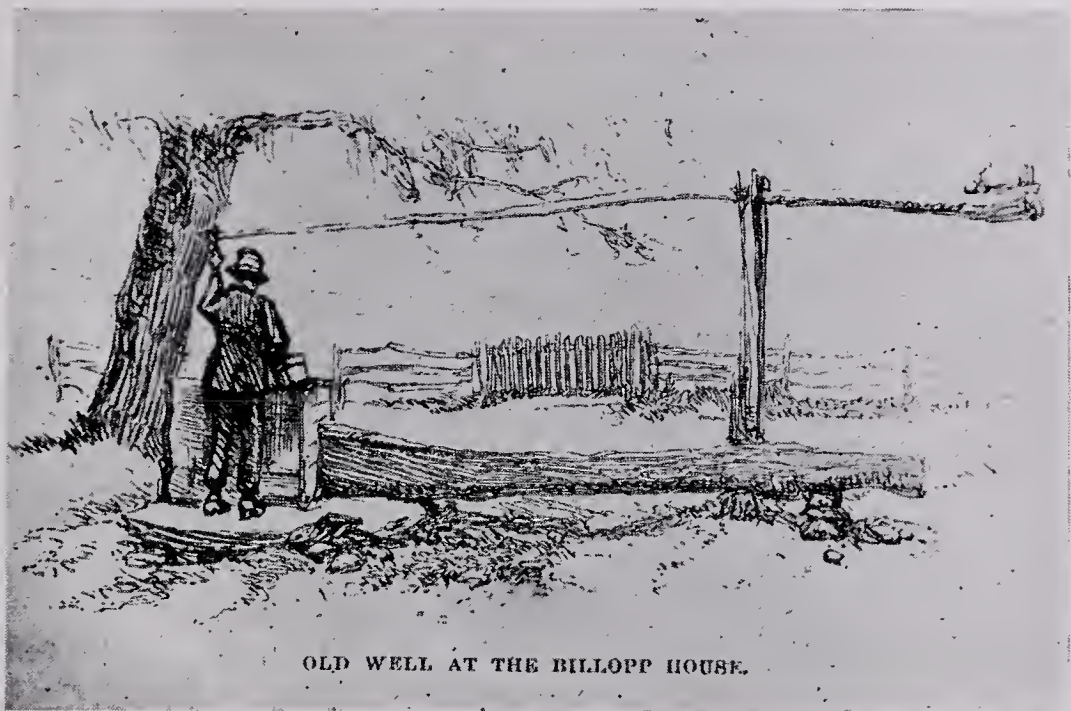
THE OLD MANOR HOUSE AND GROUNDS

The earliest account of the old Conference House that conveys an idea of its size and contents, is to be found in the will of Captain Christopher Billop written in London and dated 25 April, 1724. We refer the reader to this will printed in the chapter on Captain Billop. The will clearly shows that the Manor of Bentley was early a rich estate, and that the imposing stone house had its rooms well furnished. Had Mrs. Skinner, Billop's eldest daughter, who died about 1725, inherited the property, she, under the conditions of the will, was to leave to her successors "five good Feather beds with Sheets Blanketts Pillows Curtains and Vallens and other furniture thereunto belonging with such Brass pewter and Wooden Ware as are requisite for a Family of six people with Table Linnen and all manner of necessaries for the kitchen fit and Convenient with five pair of Iron Dogs and five fire shovells and Tongs for the Chambers with a Table in each Room and such Seats as are used in that Country and also proper Utensills for a Dairy of ten Cows and sufficient Casks in the Cellar for Cyder and all other Conveniences for making of Cyder and shall also leave to the said Christopher Farmar four Horses and Six Oxen fit for the plough with Carts and ploughs and Harrows and all other Implements of Husbandry thereunto belonging and in that County Used of Axes Howes and the like with ten Milch Cowes and Calves that same Spring and years falling and rearing and three Steers of three years old four Steers of two years old four Heifers of two years old and ten yearlings and a Bull of two years old Ten hogs of a twelve month old two Sows and a Boar and one hundred Ewes and a Ram Fifty Lambs Ten Weathers of two years old with what fowls shall be at the House. . . . "

The next account of the house is the one by Gabriel P. Disoway of 1846 to be found in the introduction to this volume, and then we have the one from *Anthon's Notes*, which is as follows:—

"Aug. 27th, 1853. Visited the old Billopp house. The interior of the house presents nothing remarkable. The hall and

staircase are extremely plain. In fact there is no decoration to be seen anywhere. The rooms have been undersized in a mean style.¹ The room at the N. W. corner of the house, which, as I was last summer informed by Mr. Christopher, was the scene of the Meeting in 1776, is without ornament, shabby and ill proportioned. A young lady there, the daughter I believe of Mr. Christopher, the present tenant, said that this room originally extended entirely across the house but had been partitioned off at the east end. (There is a fine well with an old fashioned tree



THE OLD WELL AT THE BILLOPP HOUSE.

HARPER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE, 1878

and pole at the north east corner of the house.) The room where, as she told us, the spot of blood was said to be fixed in the floor, produced by Billopp's killing a girl, one of his slaves, is in the second story at the south end and extends directly across the house. This is the only room which has an interesting appearance being apparently in its original condition. A small closet is formed by a partition reaching from the corner of the chimney piece to the front wall and includes the south window of that corner.² Miss Christopher said she had never been able to dis-

¹ Some of the original rooms had been divided at the time of Anthon's visit.

² This closet is still present.

cover the stain of blood. I examined every room in the main house except that portion on the first floor to the south of the hall. The garret is all open. The timber work is very plain. There are no signs of a window on the W. face of the roof.'³

In *Anthon's Notes* there is a record of a Conversation with Mr Disosway at his residence, Staten Island, Thursday, December 26th, 1850. "The spot of blood on the floor was said to have been occasioned in this way: Billopp, who was a man of violent passions, knocked a negro girl down with a bit and killed her."

Anthon also records in his *Notes*, August 24, 1852, that "Mrs. Keeler, wife of Charles Keeler, cousin of E. B. S. [Seaman] lives in Brooklyn, is 60 yrs. of age, was born in Nova Scotia, and can give much information about the Billopp family. Ann Billopp, a maiden lady, daughter of Col. Christopher Billopp, visited Staten Island in 1824. She visited the old Billopp House. There was an old trumpet creeper vine growing over it and in the family burial ground a black walnut tree and a wild cherry. This lady took some of the flowers of the vine with some of the nuts and cherries home to Nova Scotia and presented them to the old Colonel, who wept like a child on beholding them."

We quote still further from *Anthon Notes*:

Here Lyes
y^e Body of Evjenea
y^e Wife of Thomas
Billopp Aged 23 years
Dec^d March y^e 22^d
1735

Here Lyes y^e Body of
Thomas Billopp Esq^r:
Son of Thomas Farmar
Esq^r. Dec^d. August y^e
2^d 1750 In y^e 39th
year of his Age

"Two headstones standing side by side, as represented above in the family cemetery at Bentley. The one in memory of Eugenia Billopp is surmounted by the head and wings of a cherub, that in memory of Thomas Billopp by a death's head with wings. The material of both is brown sand stone. The cemetery is situated some 300 yards to the east of the old Manor House. It consists of a small mound, overshadowed by an apple

³ Anthon evidently overlooked the fact that two of the rafters of the roof at the front of the house have been cut, and it is here that the two dormer windows were at one time located. This is the southwesterly side of the house.

tree and three straggling wild cherries, and was almost surrounded when I saw it on the 23^d of August 1853 by a field of Indian corn. There have been two other trees on the spot which are now cut down and their stumps only remain, one of great size and shown by the fresh growth sprouting from it to have been a wild cherry, the other much smaller and affording no indication to what species it belonged. There are two small spaces enclosed by wooden palings, and in one is a small rude headstone with no inscription. There are no other headstones that can be recognized as such, beside the three already mentioned.

“The view from the spot is beautiful, comprising the whole of Raritan and Sandy Hook Bays with their bordering highlands from the mouth of the Highlands to Navesink.”

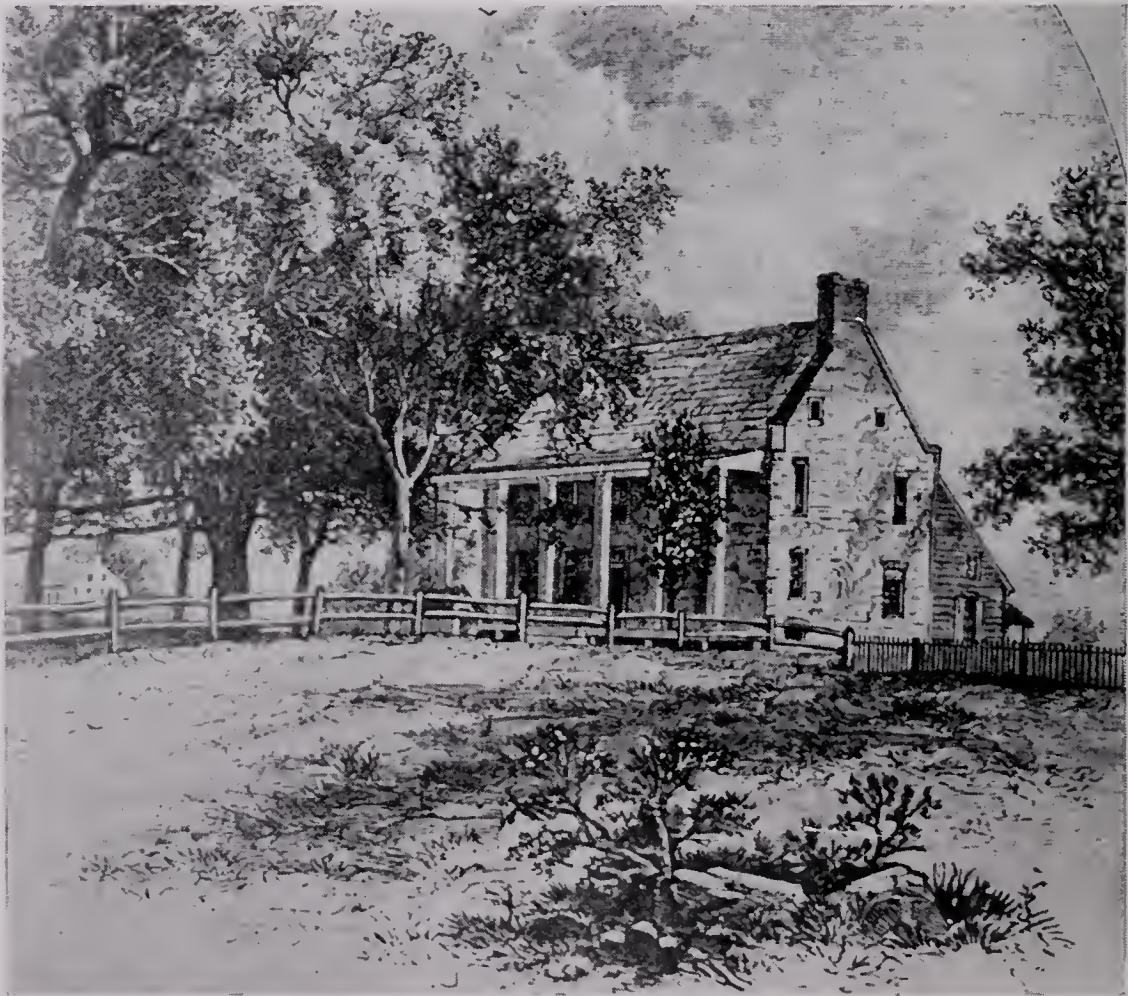
In the deed of May 1, 1781, of the Manor house and 373 acres of land to Samuel Ward (*Richmond County Deeds, Liber E.*, pp. 132–145) this burying ground is excepted, and the deed also gives some further information as to the persons buried in the plot. “. . . except all mines or minerals that may be on the above premises, and also sixty feet square for a burial place where the said Christopher Billopp’s Father, Mother and family is Buried, his father’s head stone is to be the centre of the square, which said Ground is to be reserved to the said Christopher Billopps his heirs and assigns for that purpose and shall not be broke up for any other use or Design whatever.” [This deed is also mentioned by Anthon.]

From this it would appear that Sarah Leonard, the second wife of Thomas Billopp and mother of Col. Christopher Billopp, was also buried in the family burying ground at Bentley, though there is no record of any gravestone having been erected to her memory.

William A. Whitehead in his *Contributions to the Early History of Perth Amboy and Adjoining Country*, 1856, has an account of the Billopp family and of Christopher Billopp. He states on p. 94: “His residence, yet standing, although antiquated and neglected in its appearance, is a prominent object in the view of the traveller between New York and Philadelphia by the Camden and Amboy route. While occupied by him it was surrounded by fruit trees and cultivated grounds, and wore the aspect of gentility and comfort. The dilapidated condition of the



“THE BENTLEY MANOR HOUSE.” COLOR VIEW BY ABRM. HOSIER, 1873.
COLLECTION, N. Y. HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE BILLOPP HOUSE ON STATEN ISLAND. POTTER'S AM. MONTHLY, 1876

house adds not a little to the interest it possesses as a memento of the ante revolutionary period and also from its having been the place of conference between the American Commissioners and Lord Howe in 1776."

In his account of the Billopp House in *Potter's American Monthly*, April, 1876, Benson J. Lossing, the historian states: "It is a plain, substantial building of stone, and standing upon the brow of a gentle declivity that slopes to the waters of a strait known as the Kills, that flow backward and forward between it and the pleasant town of Perth Amboy, on the main, with the rise and fall of the tides. Around it spreads out a spacious lawn that extends down to the water, and huge willows and clumps of pines, almost conceal it from the view of passengers on the strait. Our picture is made from a photograph kindly furnished by William A. Whitehead, Esq., a careful historian, and Secretary of the New Jersey Historical Society, who procured it in the summer of 1875. The building seems to have been scarcely changed in aspect, since I visited and made a pencil sketch of it, twenty-six years ago. Only the piazza in front appears to be modern. [The piazza is present in the De Groot sketch of 1844.] The mansion and the surrounding grounds belong, I believe, to the estate of the late William H. Aspinwall, of New York. Two head-stones have been removed from their places in the old family burial-ground, and now stand leaning against a fence near the house. . . . Of course the Billopp House, like almost every other ancient mansion, has had its ghost, sometimes seen and sometimes only heard by the occupants. On the occasion of my visit to the house, more than a quarter of a century ago, I was told by a resident of Amboy, whom I met on the steamer Transport, that tradition spoke of the spirit of a young maiden that had been seen and heard there many years before. As the story ran, and was believed, Colonel Billopp had won the affections of a sweet maiden in his neighborhood, and had promised to marry her, but meeting with another—the "handsome Jane" [Seaman]—more beautiful and attractive, with prospective wealth, and withal much higher in the social scale, he married her. The forsaken maiden, who was of an exceedingly sensitive nature, died of genuine love-sickness and a broken heart. From time to time the sleepers in a certain

chamber in the old mansion would be awakened at midnight, by a sweet feminine voice murmuring a plaintive song. It is also said that the shadow of a young woman used to be seen at the midnight hour, flitting out of the window on moonlit nights, arrayed in garments of the fashion a hundred years ago. A rustic bard, who had heard the story of Billopp's unfaithfulness, and the ghost, and believed it, explained the mystery in the following lines:

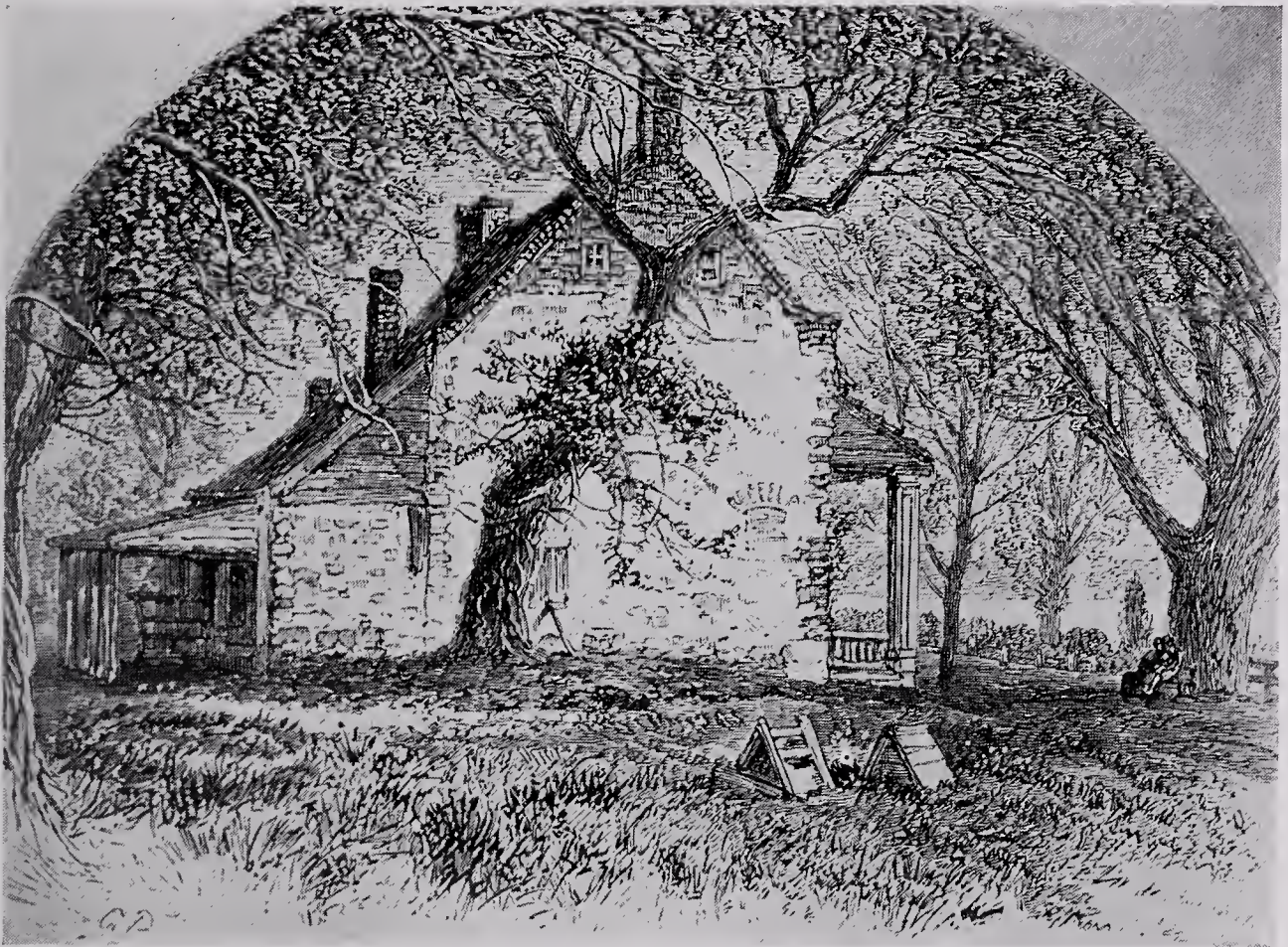
“Old Billopp was a jolly lad
Before he married Jenny:
He flirted with a pretty maid
Who wasn't worth a penny.
He told her he'd be true as steel
And marry her most surely:
She trusted him, as maidens will,
With truth and love so purely.
He jilted her when Jenny's eyes
And gold flashed on his vision;
And then the darn'd old rascal spurned
The maiden with derision.
She pined and died. Her ghost it is
That round the mansion hovers,
And sings that plaintive song about
The faithlessness of lovers.”

“This was the local tradition. The whole story is doubtless pure fiction.”

Coming to a later date we have an account by Mr. Ira K. Morris of his observations on the old house written in 1890, and to be found in the Proceedings of the *Natural Science Association of Staten Island* for December 13 of that year. “When the Bentley Manor Company took possession of the property they permitted Mr. [Richard] Christopher and his aged wife to remain, and he is employed to show the visitors through the rooms and explain to them what he knows about the old house and the noted people who have made it their home. The kind old man, whose hair is silvered with age, evidently feels very proud of his

responsible position and performs his task to the best of his ability.

“Accompanied by the general manager of the Bentley Manor Company, Mr. Richard S. Satterlee, we visited the house on Saturday last, (December 6th), and, with Mr. Christopher as guide, we went through every room and closet within it. There is the large hall in the center of the building, apparently in its pristine condition. Mr. Satterlee has fitted up a little desk, where he



THE OLD BILLOPP HOUSE

Harper's Monthly Magazine, 1878

keeps a register, and, on glancing over its pages we find the names of visitors from California, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Florida, Rhode Island, Wyoming, Illinois, Washington, Michigan, and so on. Resting against the wall, on the right of the entrance, are the two famous brown headstones that have been familiar to every generation of Staten Island for considerably over a century. One stone has on it the old fashioned death's-head and is badly nicked and bears this inscription:⁴

⁴ The gravestone inscriptions are taken from Morris's Memorial History, where they are more correctly given than in his article here quoted.

of much historical importance to all who visit the house, and are the indisputable proof-links in the genealogy of the Billopps.

“We next visited the old kitchen. There is the great fire place, really large enough for half a dozen men to stand in at a time, while at its back is the huge oven of which so much has been written. And there, too, it is remarkable to state, is the original iron trammel, and hanging to which are all the hooks and chains that were placed there more than two centuries ago. Above this, on the thick walls of the chimney, are the hooks on which, in days of yore, they used to hang their meat for smoking. The kitchen is in the low part, which also contains a sitting and dining room. There is a unique corner cupboard in the kitchen which formerly stood in one of the large front rooms. It bears evidence of once having been a receptacle for silver and other valuable wares.

“A curiosity is the inside stairway to the Basement. Little and big steps lead at right angles down into one of the most unique spots imaginable. Above are the great white oak beams, so hard that it seems impossible to penetrate them with a knife blade, and they rest on a foundation of huge stones about four feet in thickness, and held together by a flint-like cement. In this old basement is laid one of the scenes in ‘The Water Witch,’⁵ one of Fenimore Cooper’s novels. The floor is of brick, and close beside the main entrance is a fire-place that compares with the one in the kitchen. This basement, there is every reason to believe, was originally used as a kitchen. In the rear of it—or rather, on the north side—is located a strange dungeon-like cellar, which, tradition tells us, was used for imprisoning many a patriot of the Revolution, while the Billopp House was a British outpost.⁶

“The room on the right of the entrance to the main hall is undoubtedly the old parlor. It is the room, we believe, in which

⁵ No such account has been found; Cooper, however, describes the near-by bay, etc.

⁶ In the history of *Staten Island* published in *The Evening Post*, Oct. 15, 1873, and later, it is stated: “There is an ample wine cellar under the mansion. Doubtless there was an ‘Old Simon the cellarer,’ and butlers and servants and huntsmen and sailing masters. The island abounded in game, and there were horses and hounds. The forests, the fields and the fisheries afforded the means of unbounded hospitality.”

the famous interview was held between Lord Howe and John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Edward Rutledge, shortly after the battle of Long Island. . . . The room is now totally devoid of furniture, save two old portrait paintings of Joseph Christopher and his wife, who were the host and hostess of old Richmond County Hall, in Richmond Village, about a half a century ago. The ancient fire-place is used to warm the welcome visitors, and the 'back-logs' crackle and snap as of yore. The mantle is well covered with relics which Mr. Satterlee has collected about the premises, among which are bullets and various Indian implements.

.
 "On the opposite side of the hall is what is generally believed to have been the dining room during the times of the Billopps. It was originally a very large room, but was divided by Mr. Christopher. . . .

"On the second floor the rooms are naked and empty. There have evidently been no material changes in them during the two long centuries. But they are indeed a study within themselves. . . . There were originally three rooms on the second floor, but there are four now.⁷

"The old garret—shades of boyhood, what reveries fill the mind up there! The strong white oak beams, morticed and braced in every direction, hard and firm with age, covered with great, long shingles that were undoubtedly the first to form the roof—how many have they protected from the sun, the wind and the rain! The old 'slave quarters' on the north end of the floor were torn away many years ago, and the garret is now one large room. For at least one hundred and fifty years the slaves of the Billopps, the Wards, and other masters slept in that old garret.

.
 "The old house will need many repairs soon. The old doors and windows that were in service at the commencement are still there, but they are greatly worn, and in many places about the house there are evidences of the devastation and ruin of moth and rust."

⁷ It will be noted that the number of original rooms given in this account agrees with that of Capt. Christopher Billopp's will of 1724.



REAR VIEW OF THE BILLOPP OR CONFERENCE HOUSE, ABOUT 1885,
SHOWING THE WELL



BILLOPP OR CONFERENCE HOUSE, 1926

Photograph by Wm. T. Davis

In the *Sketch Of The Old Billopp House Written By One Of The Billopps*, published by H. E. Pickersgill in the *Perth Amboy Evening News*, February 17, 1926, there is the statement that "the Manor house now standing on Staten Island . . . was completed in the year 1699." It is certain that the fourteen foot extension at the back of the house, with the long sloping roof, was added after the main house had been finished, for the spaces once occupied by the windows on the easterly side, or back of the house, can still be seen. After the extension was built, the in-



BILLOPP OR CONFERENCE HOUSE, 1910

Photograph by Wm. T. Davis

terior east wall in each of the rooms was replastered. The extension covers the whole length of the original house, namely, forty-eight feet; the sides of the house are twenty-eight feet. What we considered to have been the Conference Room, namely, the main room on the north side of the house, was about twenty-four feet three inches long and seventeen feet broad. The one on the southerly side of the hall is about three feet narrower, and has been divided.

To quote further from the above-mentioned sketch (Part 6, February 27, 1926), said to have been written by the Reverend Thomas Farmar Billopp, a grandson of the old colonel, who according to Charles Farmar Billopp, died while rector of St. Barnabas Church, Prince George County, Md., in 1876, beloved and revered by all. He writes: "In the days of the Tory colonel there was kept just inside the door-way, suspended from a pair of antlers attached to the wall, a fine, large spyglass which was generally used to examine any unusual object upon the bay, or to inspect distinctly the surrounding scenery. This glass must have been in frequent demand in the exciting times of the Revolution, when the Kills was the dividing line between the opposing parties. . . . This interesting relic is now in the possession of the colonel's great grandson, a resident of Maryland, who bears his name. The instrument, a very fine one, still in perfect order, by Spencer Browning & Rust, London. Scratched upon it with some sharp instrument is the colonel's name and the date, 1764."

It is stated that the Rev. Thomas Farmar Billopp was also rector of Emmanuel Church in Newcastle, Delaware, "which church bore a particular interest, inasmuch as it occupied the identical spot on which formerly stood the fort commanded by his ancestor, Captain Christopher Billopp, nearly two hundred years before."

The writer's memories of the old Billopp or Conference House date back to the year 1881, when the one-time private lane leading from the Amboy Road, was more beautiful and attractive than in all likelihood it will ever be again. In those days there were many native red cedars along the old lane, and the sandy foot-path led a winding way among them. Many of the trees were of great size, and we used to be interested in measuring their trunks. Now and then a still smaller lane led off to some house standing on the bluff, or in the opposite direction to the woods and Uncle Ed. Wood's Brook. At that time the fields about the old house were cultivated each spring, and the ground, especially near the edge of the bluff, abounded in oyster shells, turned up by the plow. These were the remains of the feasts held there long ago by the Indians, when they were in possession. On these occasions we collected scores of implements; arrow heads, fragments of pottery, hammer-stones, an occasional axe,



From recent photographs

ENTRANCE TO ORIGINAL KITCHEN



SOUTH END OF HOUSE

but above all many net sinkers—stones of suitable size grooved all around, or simply notched. The crop of Indian implements seems to be well nigh inexhaustible, and some are to be found even at the present time.

The interesting old building, made still more interesting and picturesque to us because of the great variety of field stones



THE PATH LEADING FROM THE BILLOPP HOUSE
TO THE SHORE—MAY, 1920

Photograph by Wm. T. Davis

used in its construction, was ever attractive, and was carefully inspected on each of our visits. At that time the well-sweep was in working order. At that time also the gravestone to Eugenea, and that of Thomas Billopp, her husband, stood against the fence by the lane, and there were interesting plants about, such as

only grew on our Island in the sandy ground near the old Manor House.

After the Wm. H. Aspinwall interest in the property had been purchased by the Bentley Manor Company in 1889, and the subsequent foreclosure by Charles H. Leland, the cultivation of the fields became less and less, and the house was correctly described in a newspaper article of the day as: "The beautiful old building, made more picturesque because of its great age, standing there in the centre of its overgrown and unkept farm land, is one of the remaining bits of evidence of the earliest days of American history."



“THE GRAVES OF THE BILLOPP HOUSEHOLD” AFTER WHITEHEAD, 1856

In October, 1918, during the World War, the Gillespie powder plant near Morgan, New Jersey, exploded, and broke all of the windows in the front of the old house, so that the tenants moved out. Thereafter it was vacant for about two years, and was much damaged by some of the savages of civilization. Then came two Italians, who lived in the old house, and made a sticky rat-poison. It is said that they prospered at the expense of the rats, and later moved their plant to more convenient quarters in Brooklyn. The house once more left empty, was again occupied by the same tenants who had moved out in 1918.

APPENDIX

OWNERS OF THE CONFERENCE HOUSE SINCE THE DAYS OF THE BILLOPPS

Through the courtesy of the New York Title and Mortgage Company, supplemented with notes from the County records, the author is able to present the line of owners of the Conference House since the time of Colonel Billopp, together with some related matter of importance.

Samuel Ward purchased of Col. Billopp before the end of the Revolution. Deed, May 1, 1781; recorded August 10, 1788, Liber E p. 132. Ward died prior to 1813.

Thomas McFarren of the City of New York, merchant, purchased at sale July 16, 1784, from Isaac Stoutenburgh and Philip Van Cortland, Commissioners of Forfeitures for the Southern District, "the instrument in writing" being recorded May 25, 1789, Liber E p. 147, at their request. McFarren paid £4.695, N. Y. State currency, for all of Billopps land. The title to the estate had been declared "Forfeited to and vested in the People of this State by the attainder of Christopher Billop Late of the County of Richmond Esquire."

Caleb Ward, farmer and carpenter, inherited from his father Samuel Ward. In order to perfect his title he got deeds from Thomas McFarren. Deed, March 9, 1790, recorded October 8, 1795, Liber E p. 344, and Deed, March 9, 1790, recorded April 20, 1808, Liber F p. 540. Ward paid McFarren £1.800, N. Y. State currency, as mentioned in deed recorded Liber E p. 344. In the other deed, 5 shillings are given as the consideration. Caleb Ward Sr. died in 1835.

Mary Grim, "single woman," purchased from the executors of Caleb Ward: "All the real estate whereof Caleb Ward Srⁿ. died seized of in that vicinity." Deed, October 5, 1835, recorded October 19, 1835, Liber Y p. 278.

Leonard Parkinson, farmer of Southfield, and John B. Simonson of Castleton, purchased from Mary Grim. Deed October 10, 1836; recorded November 5, 1836, Liber I p. 462. Mary Grim held a mortgage.

Leonard Parkinson received from Thomas Addis Emmett, Master in Chancery, deed, March 22, 1844, recorded April 25, 1844, Liber 10 p. 687. Leonard Parkinson died December 11, 1853, intestate.

William H. Aspinwall purchased from the executors of Leonard Parkinson. Deed, October 29, 1859, recorded April 3,



RESTORATION OF CONFERENCE HOUSE

As planned by Chester A. Cole

1860, Liber 45 p. 536. Wm. H. Aspinwall paid \$45,131.20. He died in 1875.

Henry F. Eldridge purchased from executors of Wm. H. Aspinwall. Deed, April 24, 1889, recorded June 21, 1889, Liber 193 p. 1.

Bentley Manor Company, a corporation, purchased from Henry F. Eldridge, unmarried. Deed June 20, 1889, recorded June 21, 1889, Liber 193 p. 6. Consideration \$60,000.

Charles H. Leland, to whom the Aspinwall executors had assigned a mortgage of \$40,000, August 6, 1891, foreclosed and received a referee deed dated August 12, 1895, recorded September 17, 1895, Liber 246 p. 2. Charles H. Leland died in 1925.

The Harmon National Real Estate Corporation purchased from the estate of Charles H. Leland in the fall of 1925, shortly after the death of Mr. Leland, and in a deed dated April 29, 1926, recorded May 4, 1926, they very generously gave the old Bentley mansion, and about an acre of land, to the City of New York. As stated in the Introduction the deed contains the following provision: "This conveyance is made upon the express condition that the premises within mentioned shall be used for park recreational or museum purposes."

During the last twenty years, except for about two years after the explosion at Morgans, N. J., in 1918, the old house has been occupied by the Meerssemen family. An interesting chapter might be written on the many occupants of the house since the days of the Billopps.

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ADDENDA

The manuscript for the book on the Conference or Billopp House was prepared some time ago, but the book itself has been delayed in going through the press. Meanwhile search for material for the History of Staten Island to be compiled by Mr. Charles W. Leng and the writer, has been going forward, with the result that several items of interest in connection with the Manor of Bentley have been discovered.

In Clute's "*Annals of Staten Island*" (1877) there is the statement that during the administration of Governor Nicolls, Captain James Bollen, Capt. William Hill, Lieut. Humphrey Fox and [James] Coleman, all officers of the British fleet received "grants of land on Staten Island." Bayles in his "*History of Richmond County*," makes the same statement.

What they really received were promises that grants would be made to them provided certain conditions were complied with.

In the "*Proceedings of the Natural Science Association of Staten Island*," May 8, 1897, there is an article on the "*First English Grants of Land Upon Staten Island*," by Mr. Edward C. Delavan Jr., wherein there is a copy of a document issued by the Governor to Captain William Hill, filed in the office of the Secretary of the State of New York at Albany. As some of the same land promised to Hill appears later to have been actually granted to Peter Johnson and others by Anthony Colve, Governor-General under the Dutch in 1674, and still later in the two English grants to Captain Billopp, the document is of interest to us.

"Colonele Nicolls, his Promise of a
Grant to Capt. William Hill.

"Whereas, Capt. William Hill, Commander of his Maties Ship the Elias came wth me into these Parts in his Maties Service and hath requested of me five hundred Acres of Land in Staten Island, within my Governmt not Inhabited

or Planted, I doe hereby Promise unto the said William Hill five hundred Acres of Land on the South point of the said Island which when Surveyed shall be allotted unto him or his Assignes he or they Planting it wth in the usual time and rendering and paying therefore to his Royall Highness the Duke of Yorke the accustomed Rent of New Plantacons in this Country. In witnesse whereof I have hereunto set my hand and Seale at ffort James in New Yorke on Manhatan's Island this 4th day of October 1664.

“RICHARD NICOLLS [Sealed]

“Sealed and delivered in
the presence of Thomas
Bredon Math. Nicoles”
(1 Pat. 6)

Captain Hill sailed away on the *Elias*, and no one seems to have performed the conditions necessary to the granting of a patent or grant, such as was made to Johnson in 1674, and still later to Captain Billopp. It may well have been, however, that Billopp first learned of the land to be had on Staten Island from his fellow naval officers, and under a new governor and new conditions became the owner of a goodly estate. He may also before he became a captain in 1673, have served under some of them, possibly in America. It has been a matter of surprise that a captain in the British Navy would willingly give up his command and come to America as a Second Lieutenant of a company of soldiers under Andros. Like Capt. Hill he came with a governor, and like him also Captain Billopp sought a reward as a servant of the King to whom he was known through his father and the Duke of York.

The chapter on Thomas Farmar Billopp is a short one, for he died when he was but 39 years of age. Recently the following concerning him and his run-away slave was found in the “*New York Weekly Post-Boy*”, for November 11, 1745:

New York, November 4, 1745.

Run away the 26th of October last, from Thomas Billopp, of Staten Island, in the Province of New-York, a Negro Man Slave named Mingo, aged 20 Years, this Country born, speaks good English, of middle Stature or rather spare, not very black; is a very active strong Fellow; has a Scar on the Inside of his left Thigh, which is not quite healed; Had on when he went away, a Beaver Hat about half worn, a good brown Drugget Coat full long for him, Ozenbrigs Wastcoat and Trousers, a Pair of thin wash-leather Breeches, light gray worsted Stockings, and good coarse Shoes. Whoever takes up and secures the said Negro, and gives Notice thereof to his Master or to Mr. Samuel Farmar, Merchant in New-York, so that he may be had again, shall have Forty Shillings Reward, and all reasonable Charges, paid by

THOMAS BILLOPP.

N. B. It is thought he will make for some Sea-Port, in order to enter on board a Privateer. Tis at their Peril who entertain him.

In reference to the 1445 bushels of wheat mentioned on page 115, paid by Thomas Billopp in 1736 as quit-rent for 60 years, there is this interesting item in the *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts*, p. 526, under date of October 27, 1736: "Bond. Paul Michaux, sheriff of Richmond County, and John Le Count, for the paying over to Archibald Kennedy, receiver-general the quit rents collected by said sheriff."

It will be seen that it became the painful duty of Billopp's friend Paul Michaux, who was one of the executors of his will and to whom Billopp left a "compleat suit of mourning as a legacy," to collect this large amount of rent and hand it over to Archibald Kennedy.

